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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 406. FOR WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 10TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

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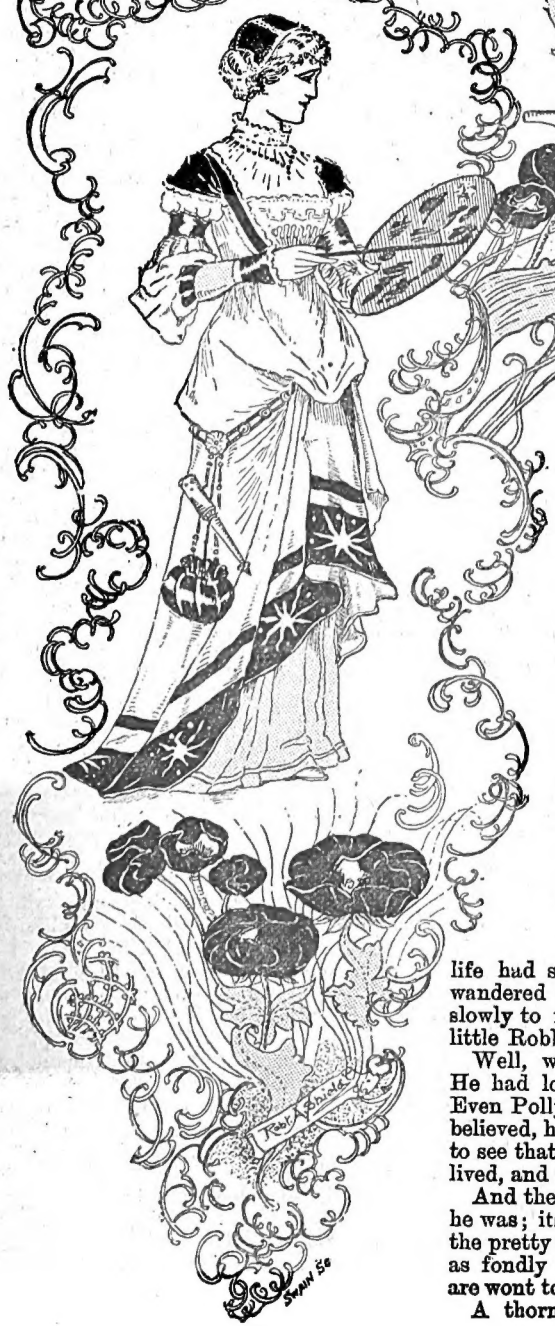
SHORT STORIES

Edited by C. Arthur Pearson.



No. 406.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending October 10th, 1896.

SANDY.

A CHEERLESS night out on the desolate Canadian marsh, whose inky pools had a scum of glistening ice upon them, whose unwholesome tufts of damp grass had stiffened in the fierce wind. Not a sound of beast or bird broke the ceaseless monotony of the whistling blast. A treacherous surface-hardening of the spongy ground had come with the frosty night, but woe to the wayfarer who trusted it.

Yet in the half-glimmer of the cloud-darkened moon a figure could have been seen, if you or I had been so unfortunate as to have been there, slowly staggering, ploughing through the slough, breaking through the thin crust of ice, sinking knee-deep in the slime, drawing himself slowly and painfully out, struggling on, falling, lying prone and helpless for a while, then trying again, with the persistency of a drunken man, to make for the lights of the town.

For the man had been drunk, to begin with. But so many immersions in ice-cold water and the struggle for life had sobered him again. He swore at himself for having wandered off the road in such an imbecile way. Then he began slowly to remember what had gone before. His child was dead—little Robbie—and he had shown his grief by getting dead drunk.

Well, what else was there for him—what cheer? what hope? He had loved the little fellow. No one could contradict that. Even Polly, who sneered at him and rated him, and, he verily believed, hated him, would not deny that fact. It was something to see that little golden head lighting up the dingy room where they lived, and now never again.

And the baby loved him, too, the miserable, drunken wretch that he was; its heavenly blue eyes lit up when they rested on him, and the pretty rosebud mouth had learned to form the word "papa," as fondly as if he had sheltered the little treasure as other fathers are wont to do.

A thorn pierced the wretched man's heart with this thought,

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and he stumbled blindly forward. Covered with slime, which dripped from his rags, with wild, haggard face and unkempt hair, he stood at last, faint and worn, by the last wretched house of the town, and stared up at the dim light from one window, which told that the watcher was there.

"I can't face Polly," he muttered, slinking away again, but still lingering about, till a kindly neighbour who had been sitting with his wife, offering those consolations which the poor offer to the poor, came down and saw him.

"Go up, Sandy," she exclaimed, in a half commiserating, half-angry tone. "Go up and comfort your poor wife in this 'ere trying time. I've been a-coaxin' her to take a cup of tea, but not bite or sup has passed her lips this day; and you off carousin'! Shame on you! Have you no heart at all?"

* * * * *

The last brands of a poor fire were burning away on the hearth, and by them sat a woman, slowly rocking herself to and fro in a dull monotony of motion that was half unconscious.

She was wretchedly clad, but her dress was clean and neat. Her dark, handsome face was turned to the fire, and in spite of her grief you could see that her eyes were fine, though they were fixed in a stony stare, that her hair was silken and purplish black, though it was dragged carelessly back from her forehead. She never looked up nor spoke when the door opened and shut. She felt who had come in, and that his great wistful eyes, like those of a beaten hound, were seeking her face anxiously.

And what an object he was for that room, poor as it was! It had been made as clean as its wretchedness would allow, fit for the presence of the Angel of Death. Sandy, looking about helplessly, saw this, and how the muddy water was running down and making dirty puddles on the floor; but he had no other clothes to put on, so he crept nearer to the fire, humbly too, as one who had no right.

At last he could bear the silence no longer, there seemed such a deathly hush in the room, the very hush of death.

"I say, Polly, won't you have a cup of tea now? Mrs. Simmons has left the teapot here I see. I'll take some with you, for I'm soaked through and all of a shiver."

Still no answer.

"Are you hard on me for going off, Polly?" he went on. "I'm a wretched fellow, weak, weak as water. I couldn't stand it, I couldn't, I loved him."

"Yet you murdered him." She was roused now, and turned her flaming eyes upon her husband. "It's too late now to talk, or to cry maudlin' tears over him. His death is on you."

"As how?" faltered Sandy, shivering as with a more deadly chill than the soaking slime could give. "Polly, you're excited, and don't know what you're saying, or you wouldn't be so hard on a cove now."

"Now is the time," the woman went on—"now, when my child lies there dead—dead of want, of cold, of hunger, while you have loitered away your time with your pals and we have starved on the pittance I have earned. Oh, my darling! oh, my Robbie!"

"Not—not starved, Polly," muttered Sandy, his lips quivering. "Don't say starved; you never were without bread."

"Bread! My child needed other things—jellies, beef-tea, chicken, they would have raised him up. Insufficient nourishment, the doctor said."

Sandy groaned.

"Don't pretend that you were ignorant of it," she went on; "I told you weeks ago."

"So you did, Polly, so you did. Oh, what a miserable wretch I am."

The woman turned to the fire again, and began rocking.

"I'll turn over a new leaf now, Polly," the man began looking at her eagerly; "I will, so help me Heaven. I've been thinking it over as I came through the marsh."

She made no sign.

"I'll—I'll kneel down by—by the darling's bed, if you like, and take an oath, that never—never——"

"No, you need not. It makes no difference."

"No difference?"

"No, not to me. I shall not be here to see the reformation. If you stand or fall, it is for yourself now."

"What—what—what can you mean, Polly?" Sandy faltered, turning paler, and shivering more and more.

For the fire had nearly gone out now, and its fitful light fell faintly on the two faces.

"I mean that when my darling is laid in the ground I am going away. I mean that I never wish to see your face again."

Sandy recoiled as if he had been struck a great blow. He gasped a moment, but could not speak.

"Did you think this could go on for ever?" she said more fiercely. "Did you believe that I would let you drag me down lower and lower into the mire, because I was mad and blind enough to think I loved you once? Can you not see that you have killed my love and now you have killed the child?"

"Oh, don't say such cruel words, Polly!" faltered Sandy. "I've—never—never used you bad, have I? Never! I have been weak. I can't stand the temptation of a friendly glass. I've been unlucky, but cruel, never! Why, I never have lifted a hand against you, even when I was dead-drunk. I've loved you always, Polly. I know you're too good for a miserable wretch like me, but if you'll only forgive me this once——"

"I'll never forgive you—never!" she interrupted, the fitful flash of the fire illuminating her handsome face and shining eyes as she spoke. "If you lay dying before me, if it was your last prayer, I would not forgive you."

Sandy then shrank into silence. Big, burly giant that he was, the spirit and fire of the slender little woman had always cowed him. He had no more to say; the unforgiving wrath of Polly's last words could not be answered. He saw that no pleading could avail. No friendly hand would be stretched out to keep him from going to the dogs. In a half-troubled doze he sat there, starting up now and then to see his wife sitting near, motionless, with wide, staring eyes, which burned on tearlessly. And near them lay, in the everlasting peace of death, the little child who belonged to both—the bond that had held together these dissonant souls. How far he was removed from the storms that compassed them, lifted straight out of the dingy room into the sunshine of God's smile into the city of the golden streets and gates of pearl! Ah, it was well with the child; it was well!

Something like these thoughts swept with others through the brain of the dry-eyed woman who kept that dreary vigil. She thought, too, of her own past, of the time when she had invested the wretched object before her, who had sunk into the dead sleep of exhaustion, with ideal charms. His handsome, blonde, innocent face, his

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kindly blue eyes, had won her, spite of the rumours of his habits. She had scorned all warning; she had chosen for herself, and had reaped a harvest of wretchedness ever since.

But the end had come. Thank God! the end had come! She felt no remorse as she thought of it, no sudden tenderness, no faintest remnant of her old love. Her heart was dead. Sometimes her thoughts, as the hours went on, projected themselves into the future. She had some dreams for that, stricken and wretched as she was. She knew that she possessed a voice of purest tone and quality. She would go on the stage; she could make a living that way, once free from the horrible clog that had dragged her down. She would rise; socially and by her education she had always been above him. People had wondered at her choice. Bitterly she wondered at it herself now, as she sat by the fireless hearth.

Poor Sandy woke, shivering still, yet feverishly hot at times, from the heavy sleep into which he had fallen. For day had dawned—a bleak day, with a clouded sun and a breath of frost in it. Some neighbours began to come in. They had collected money among themselves for the poor pine coffin, and one had borrowed a black dress for the mother; but no one troubled himself about Sandy and his rags. They were dry now, and the mud stiffened upon them, as he sat there listening, with half-dazed face, to the minister reading over Robbie, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

"Better, better for him," thought the wretched man. "If he had lived, he might have got far enough off that place—as far as I am."

But when he heard the coffin-lid screwed on, he could bear it no longer, but slunk away out of the room, out into the desolate country, where he stayed all day.

And the child was laid in its last resting-place. The sky looked leaden above, and the ground frost-blackened below, when the broken blossom was laid there; and the wretched mother did not look beyond, did not remember that the flower was but transplanted to the garden of the Lord.

She turned away hurriedly at last, and, with feverish haste, reached the room that she had called home. She declined all kindly invitations from pitying neighbours. She was going away for a while—to friends, she said with a faint and bitter smile.

The poor bundle of clothes was soon made up, the black dress returned to its owner, and the woman looked about the wretched room, and bade it farewell for ever. That part of her life was finished, and the "amen" said. She would forget that she had ever married. Ah, could she forget Robbie? She found a broken plaything that had belonged to him, and kissed it passionately. Then she saw his little, worn shoes. Oh, worn and poor they were, for he had never had but that pair, and her tears burst forth! But she took no memento of him but the little golden curl she had cut from his dead brow, and so she went out beneath the sunless sky, and into the frosty air.

Three years had passed, and brought the same season again; this time a white earth, robed as in costly ermine, decked with diamond coronets, lay beneath a sky of cloudless blue. Through the white streets of the city sleighs of all forms and colours flew like birds, and the bells rang a ceaseless chime. The urchins who had no sleds watched the others with hungry eyes. Some, with artistic longings, were devouring the bills at the door of a concert-room.

"Stunnin' singer, you bet, Joe," said one. "A lady as mother washes for guv her a ticket, and she hain't time to go, and I'm goin' instead. My eyes, won't it be a lark, for I've twopence halfpenny for oranges, too!"

"Ho!" returned one cynically, who had no chance of admission to this paradise, and so naturally derided it, "kin she sing, 'Carry the news to Mary,' or 'The Prairie Flower,' ekil to that gal in Slimmin's Saloon? Wot's her name, now? Jest spell it out, if ye kin. Ought to be boiled, it's so tough."

But the other read it, with a feeling of great educational superiority, "Madame Pauline Montmorency. First appearance in M——. The great cantatrice."

"Stop," interrupted the other. "Wot's that, now?"

The reader was "stumped," as they say in college.

"I've seen," said the questioner thoughtfully, "something like that word. Won't swear 'twas the werry same, but it meant some wenomous reptile. Do you think she brings it with her?"

"Oh, cork up, youngster!" cried the other boy; "she's a singer. That 'ere word means a singer."

While this discussion took place, a sleigh like a sea-shell, pale green with crimson lining, glided by, but the boys who stared at it had no idea that it contained the great singer herself. Yes, wrapped in sable and velvet, with handsome tiger-skin over her knees, came Madame Pauline Montmorency herself, looking keenly about her yet with little human interest in her eyes, on the town she had left on foot three years ago.

The gorgeous splendour of this diamond day, and the cold wan dreariness of that, were as much in contrast as her life.

With a sigh, which was for the little grave which she knew was piled high with snow-drifts now, Polly dismounted at the door of the hotel where she was to stay, and walked up to its best rooms, which had been assigned her.

They were very pleasant, too, Pauline thought, as she looked into the pretty parlour, with its velvet carpets and lace curtains, and the beautiful flowers that filled the vases. People had already sent bouquets to greet her.

She sat down in the great arm-chair before the blazing fire with a sense of comfort stealing over her. She had accepted the invitation from M—— with some hesitation. It stirred up the ghosts of the past unpleasantly. Not that she ever forgot. Oh, no! in her greatest triumphs she never had been able to forget. In the glow of lights, with musical laughter about her, how often, as at a wizard's touch, all had floated away, and instead arose a vision of that bare and wretched room with Sandy's weak handsome face and her dear boy! Or, more wretched still, the tiny grave in the frost-blackened earth.

She had come partly to put a gravestone to that little, neglected grave, and to engage someone to keep it neatly—to plant flowers on it when the time came. As for Sandy, he had drunk himself to death long ago. There was no doubt of that. And she grew impatient that her thoughts would linger unpleasantly about that imaginary death-bed with no friend near; or was it a death-bed at all, and not a more wretched death upon a desolate marsh, frozen by insensible degrees, or some blind fall, that had dashed life out of him? Ah, she was glad she had been spared that sight. She would hear something, probably, before she left M——.

She started uneasily, though, and began to lay out her dress for the evening. It was the softest tulle—like a summer cloud with endless flutterings. She wore it

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with coral of the palest rose tint, and she knew she was beautiful in it. No one would recognise in her the worn and haggard woman who had gone away in a faded print dress. Of course, no one had known her then. Now all delighted to do her honour.

Of course, Sandy would have known her, if he had been living. She had quite decided that he was dead. In any guise he must have known her, but——

Well, who could be knocking now? The manager, perhaps, or someone from him. The trim servant-maid opens the parlour door, and Pauline goes in expectantly.

"A gentle—a—a—man," she murmured, hesitating about the term.

And Pauline, looking at her wonderingly, sees behind her the face of Sandy!

Well, it was not so very wonderful that she should see it here. She might have expected it. Yet she started back as if she had seen a ghost, for she had so resolutely believed him dead. He, meanwhile, stood dazzled at her splendour, at her rich dress with its costly lace, at the banded satin-smooth braids of her splendid hair, at her glowing beauty, that outshone all. Very, very humbly, he stood there, not offering to come forward, not expecting any greeting, only devoured with a great longing to see her once more. He had put on his best, too—a homely suit, but not ragged. His face, paler and thinner, was handsome still, but the old dissipation told on his trembling lips and nervous hands, the results of the past.

"Why—why, Polly!" he ejaculated.

"What brought you here?" she asked sharply. "How did you find me out?"

"I watched for you," he answered simply. "I found out long ago that you were my Polly and I've been reading papers and hearing of you. When I knew you were coming I hung about and learned all I could. You might have seen me at the door of the hotel when you came up, if you had looked."

"And what was your object in watching for me?" she inquired, in a cold, indifferent voice.

"Object? Well"—the pale face flushed—"I reckon it is to see you again—just to see you again. You won't understand that, Polly?"

"No, I do not understand it," she answered, with decision. "As I had left you for ever—as I never wished to see your face again—I cannot understand it."

Sandy stood still just where he was when he entered the room—he made no further advance into it, but looked at his wife with a silent wondering gaze. Was this the fond young girl he had married—who had defied her friends for him? or was it all a dream? It seemed so now. He rubbed his eyes and looked at her, half-buried in the crimson velvet depths of the arm-chair, with one white hand, sparkling with rings, resting on the arm of it, and her cold, shining eyes fixed on his face.

"Well," he hesitated, "I had one more object in coming. I thought you might care to hear it—that it might make a difference. I have not tasted a drop of liquor since little Robbie was buried."

"Ah! I am glad for your sake to hear it."

But the face did not change beneath Sandy's eager look.

"Only for my sake, Polly?" he asked.

"Only for your sake," she echoed. "It can make no difference to me—none."

Sandy's face fell. He looked at the floor. His hopes were so utterly dashed. He had lived all these years with the fond belief that his struggle and victory would be rewarded one day. It had been hard, too—a hand-to-hand fight with the powers of darkness—and he had been proud of his success. Now it proved all in vain. The pretty little home he had imagined—the handsome face he had pictured at his hearth, all vanished, leaving not a vestige. A whirling chaos swallowed up all, and Sandy's brain seemed whirling away, too.

He snatched at the nearest chair to steady himself, for the solid earth beneath seemed heaving under his feet.

"I was mortal sick after you left me, Polly—at death's door, with a long fever. The neighbours were good, too; but I had many a lonely, weary hour, that put me back a long time; but when I was well I got work. I am not very gifted, Polly; but now that I am steady I make enough. You should never suffer again. I know a nice little cottage—white, Polly, with roses over it in the summer. If you could overlook the past. I've never ceased to love you—never."

It was a long speech made with much hesitation, and Sandy seemed to hear his heart beat like a muffled drum while he was speaking. He knew that the law gave him the right to compel this beautiful woman to go with him, but he never thought of compulsion. If she would not go of her own free will, why, then, he must go on his way alone.

He saw his answer in her face before she spoke.

"If you offered me a palace instead of the white cottage," she answered, looking calmly at him, "it would be all the same. You can never be anything to me again. I told you that dreadful night that you had killed my love. There is no resurrection for a dead love; do you know that?"

"I—I think I understand you, Polly," answered the poor fellow. "You were always cleverer than me, and grander in your language; but I gather your meaning, although there is such a buzzing in my head. Don't be afraid. I'll go away quietly, now I've got my answer. No one knows that you're my wife, and I'll not make them any wiser. Good-bye."

"I'm glad you take so rational a view of things," Pauline answered. "Good-bye."

And the slow, heavy step echoed along the hall, showing in its sound a heavy heart.

And Polly turned back to the pretty white dress, with its vaporous folds, with a shiver, as if her coldness had made the very air chilly. The dress looked like a shroud.

But that night, in the lighted hall, the glow had come back again. Her cheeks and lips were like her coral ornaments. Her voice soared up clear and sweet as a bird's; flowers fell around her, cheers rang about her, and the triumph seemed to sweep away every vestige of the dull pain which had been gnawing at her heart.

To go back to that poor, dull life, it would have been madness. To put aside the full, sparkling draught of flattery, which had become the wine of life to her, for the common drink of water. No; even if Sandy did all he promised, she could not be content. And then he was so weak—who knew that he would not fall again?

Yet, somehow, when the songs were over, and the surging crowd had poured out into the street, and she was wrapping the furs about her in her sleigh, the plaintive voice and simple words echoed on in her brain, instead of the cheers of the crowd. She had just seated herself, and the driver was helping to tuck in the warm robes, when some street boys, who had waited to see the last of the songstress, set up some unearthly yells, meant

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for cheers. The horses did not so understand them, but started at once, frantically, and dashed off with Pauline, alone.

For a moment she did not comprehend, and then she saw the danger. The reins were dragging on the ground; she could not reach them. Madly they flew by the houses, over the white, shining streets, on, on, while Pauline, with white lips, murmured a prayer. She did not dare to jump. She sat still, trembling convulsively, for she felt that she was dashing straight on to her death.

The town had grown since she had left it, and improvements were being made all the time. The frightened horses were making straight for an embankment now, and one plunge there would be fatal. Pauline did not know how near death was to her, but her frantic shrieks had brought many out, who tried to stop the horses in vain.

At last, almost on the dizzy verge of the embankment, one man, plunging through the snow, caught the reins, and hung on them. He was dragged a few paces. He fell on his knees, but still he held on.

The sleigh was stopped. Kind-hearted ones pressed around. There were a hundred helpers now.

Pauline stepped out, dizzy and faint.

"Where is he?" she asked. "The man who saved me."

"Oh, he is all right," answered a gallant gentleman. "You must think of yourself now, madame, after such a shock to your nerves."

"No. I cannot go home without thanking my deliverer. I think he is not all right. I believe he was hurt."

Some inquiry was made in the crowd. Yes, the man had been hurt a bit. Tim Sanders had helped him into the store yonder.

So Pauline made her way into the "store yonder." She looked around as she entered, for some men stood there talking, and she saw no one else. She was recognised, however, and her object divined.

"He's in a room within," said the proprietor. "I've had him made comfortable, and sent for the doctor, but I fear he's mortal bad hurt."

Pauline went through the open door, feeling sick and faint. Someone hurt in saving her! Oh, how terrible! —with wife and children, perhaps, to be left alone in desolation. Ah, her life was not worth so much—she who had no one to leave. But she must see the poor man, and do what she could.

The room was neat and comfortable, a white bed stood in the corner, and on a table near a light threw a ray upon that bed and its occupant. A woman stood near, bending over him. She looked up as Pauline entered, with a surprised air.

"I am the lady whose life he saved," she said simply.

Then, with a glance at the injured man's ghastly face, with the pain convulsing it, she shrieked, ran forward, and knelt beside the bed.

"Oh, Sandy," she cried, "did you do it for me? Oh, I have not deserved it—I have not deserved it."

"Polly, I am glad," he said, a smile chasing away the pain in his face, and a look of content shining in his childish blue eyes—"I am glad God let me do some good thing before I died—glad that He let me do it for you. You'll forgive me now, Polly, all the evil things I ever did before—won't you, Polly?"

"Oh, Sandy, forgive me. I am the one who needs it I have been so cold and hard."

"You know you said, Polly"—he spoke slowly and with effort—"you said that night, 'I'll never forgive you, if it was your last prayer, if you lay dying before me, I would not do it!' These words have haunted me, Polly; and now——"

"Impious wretch that I was to speak them," Pauline cried, seizing the hand of Sandy, and covering it with kisses and tears. "Only get well, dear, and we will have that white cottage and the roses, and forget all the bitterness of the past."

"Ah!"—what a look of such longing came over the still handsome face!—"it can't be. Maybe, it would not last if it could come. You know me of old, Polly; you could never trust me. God is doing the best for us both to take me away now, before I have broken my vow, and fallen away from His Grace."

Silence for a moment, while Pauline hid her face in her hands.

"How did you come to be there, Sandy?" she said at last.

"Well," answered Sandy slowly, as if to recollect was an effort, "I went in to hear you sing. Yes, I saw you, Polly, beautiful as an angel in that white dress, and your voice—well, I'd heard it often before, when you sung little Robbie to sleep, but never like to-night. It stung me to the heart, it was so beautiful, and I could not bear the great pain of it, and so went out and wandered about the streets in a sort of aimless way, till I heard a great hue and cry, and saw you, my Polly—I knew the sleigh I had watched bringing you to the hotel —dashing by at that mad pace; and my heart gave a great leap, for I knew the embankment was so near. I think God led me to that very spot. I think He meant me to save you, dear."

"And the hurt, Sandy? Oh! why doesn't the doctor come?"

"Ah!"—in pain; the words came slowly—"the horse kicked me in the breast. I can scarcely breathe now. Do not worry for the doctor. He can do no good."

Pauline sat there a moment, thinking of the man's true heart and constant love. He had counted for so little in the times past. He seemed so great now. How coldly, a few hours ago, had she cast them away, trampling on her vows before God and man at the same time! For had she not vowed to cleave unto him, "for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer, till death us do part?" Ah, the memory of that broken vow would haunt her for ever. She had cast him away, and he had laid down his life for her.

"Sandy," she whispered, for his eyes were closed, "it has all been wrong. I should have stayed with you, and tried to help you to do right. I hope God will forgive me. I think I can never forgive myself."

"Never mind, Polly," murmured the dying man. "He has made it all right now. I was a miserable wretch. I'm glad He gave me grace to do better, and He did not let me fall. What, is that Robbie? Why he's dressed in white, Polly, as you were dressed to-night—all in white——"

And with his vision of beauty, poor Sandy's eyes closed on every earthly sight for ever.

ARNOLD WEEVIL.

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A CREATION OF SOCIETY.

Only the dull glow from the night lamp and a flickering fire lighted the room; grotesque little shadows played about the big chair pulled close to the hearth, and on the motionless figure of a woman, half sitting, half lying in it. She had been in bed, evidently, for a higher flame lighted a corner of the room for an instant and gleamed on a brass bed, the dented pillows and tossed coverings. The increased light roused her; she thrust out one foot in its furred shoe towards the flames and clasped her hands at the back of her head.

Her thoughts were following each other rapidly. If only she could sleep; she was exhausted enough, too, heaven knew, but in bed her brain worked so she could not keep still. How she had danced to-night. Her popularity did not decrease, men wanted her dances as much as—more than—when she made her *début* five years ago. One learned a deal in that time and changed—for the better. How stupid of Chester to go away; she missed him, had grown to depend upon him—one could do that; he was honest to a fault.

He was not particularly brilliant, epigram and repartee were not within his possibilities, but he inspired a sense of security one had not with any other man. Almost six months since he went away; surely he might come back. She might not want to marry him, but neither did she wish to lose him. Ah, she would ask him to come to the house-party in Scotland at Christmas; why had she not thought of that before? She wanted to see him; perhaps things would be different now.

She sprang out of the chair, and making a light at the desk, wrote rapidly:

Chester, dear man, come up to the North and spend Christmas with us, won't you? We shall open the place for a week and take some people with us; it is so long since we saw you—come! We were all at a dance to-night, at the Brayleighs', and every one spoke of you. Some think you are dead, but I said you were only in Paris; you must come to verify me! Don't fail when I want you, will you? Georgine.

She sealed and directed the envelope, and sat a moment thinking again. Was she doing right? She should be sorry to hurt him, but there was no harm in asking him; possibly he would not come, yet in her innermost consciousness she knew he would. The clock chimed 4.30, and impatiently she turned off the light and crept into bed.

* * * * *

High on the hill, now in sight and again hidden by great hemlock trees, was the house to which he had been bidden—bidden indeed, the man thought, in her pretty, impulsive fashion. Was he a fool to come, he wondered? How little or how much had the invitation meant? He wished she had come to meet him, but instead there had been sent a message! She had had a bad headache all day, but would be downstairs when he came. There would be a lot of other people, too, he supposed; he wanted only her!

The dog-cart stopped and simultaneously the door opened, letting out a flood of light, and Miss Cranston crossed the threshold.

"Is it you, Chester?" she called.

The man sprang up the steps and clasped her hand in his.

"Georgine!"

"Did you think we were unkind not to meet you? Everyone else is off skating, and I have not been well. John found your luggage? Well, and how are you; it is so good to see you again!"

"Really, dear?"

"Really, Chester. You are most welcome. Come to the fire and get warm, your hands are cold and your face glows so!"

Two terriers were playing on the hearth in an abandonment of puppy joy, but the man saw only the woman beside him and felt the warmth of his welcome more than that of the fire. Was it real? Not one of those creations of his brain that had deluded him before. But the hands he held were firm and warm, and Miss Cranston's voice as she spoke again had the *timbre* that haunted him always.

"There, are you getting warm?" she asked. "It is a long drive from the station and dull, too, alone. I will go with you when you leave. But we won't speak of that now, shall we? I want you to stay."

"My staying is in your hands," he said seriously.

She spread out her hands and looked at them critically. "Not large, are they, but the matter is: I cannot grapple with it!"

"Yes, there is more power in your two little fingers than any other woman's ten!"

"Do not let us talk figuratively"—Miss Cranston rose from the settee she had occupied—"one is so apt to mix metaphors and become ridiculous." She touched a bell. "Prentiss will show you your room. We dine at 7.30, but come down early. I am so very, very glad you have come, Chester!"

Miss Cranston's guests became much interested in her personal affairs—rather, affair! That she was the absorbing interest in Guthrie's life they knew, but not why she did not marry him—though that was no fault of theirs. But Miss Cranston had no dear friend with whom she shared her innermost being, and when questioned had a way of looking uncomprehending a moment and then of turning the conversation, that effectually baffled the most energetic seeker for knowledge.

Whether she meant now to marry Guthrie was uncertain; it was said she was likely to do a thing because it was the unexpected, and so consistent was her inconsistency that for the same reason she might do the ordinarily expected.

After dinner the night before Christmas, as they were leaving for a supper at an inn among the hills, Miss Cranston took one of the ladies aside a moment.

"I want you to start without me, Jane, for I have been detained. I shall keep Chester with me and join you in an hour. Please go, and before you miss us we shall be with you, shall we not, Chester?" she said, turning to the man who had come over to them.

"Whenever you like," he said gravely.

"You don't mind not being with them?" the woman asked, as they watched the departing vehicles. "I am going first with some presents for a little child. Her father has worked on the place for years, and she is my namesake—a dear little thing! I tried to go to-day, but was prevented, and to-morrow would not be Christmas for her without a full stocking. Here is Jane now with the parcels, and John will bring the trap round at once; we shall not be far behind the others."

"You know I would rather be with you, Georgine; what are the others to me?"

"They are clever, charming people, Chester."

"Your friends would be, dear, but they are not you."

"No, I am—I, worse luck! Are the parcels well stowed in, John? Then we are ready."

The man stood back, and the horses started at a sharp trot that took all Guthrie's attention for a few minutes. The road wound through the woods, but showed clearly in the bright moonlight that filtered through the trees.

"Georgine."

"Yes!"

"I must go back the day after to-morrow!"

"Oh, I wish you would not! Must you, Chester?"

"That is for you to decide, dear."

The snow creaked beneath the horse's hoofs, and the vehicle sped smoothly along for an indefinite time, it seemed to Guthrie, before Miss Cranston spoke:

"I understand, of course, but—I—I cannot, Chester."

"Is it impossible, dear?"

"I have tried so hard to make it possible; you do not know! I care for you so, dear, but not that way!"

"How is it?"

"I love you dearly, Chester, and I respect you—that sounds odd, does it not, 'respect'?" She gave a hard little laugh; "the word is nearly obsolete; *fin de siècle* has taken its place!"

"Georgine!"

"Have I shocked you? Forgive me. But you do not begin to know me, Chester. There is a part of my nature that is never called out with you. You are honest and good, my dear; cynicism and scepticism have no part in your being, and, except the influence you have over me, I am nothing else!"

"Admitting that to be true, dear, which I do not, you might change if you would let me help you."

"I am afraid to. Your standards and ideals are too high, Chester; they are beyond me, and I am——"

"The best woman on earth!"

"That is just it!" she exclaimed. "You have idealised me. It is what you think I am that you love, not what I know myself to be. I am not speaking lightly, Chester; there is no one in the world that knows herself better than I."

"How can you, Georgine? It is awful to hear a woman talk so!"

"I suppose it does sound terrible; that is why we keep our thoughts to ourselves!"

The man leant down and kissed her gently.

"You have just proved yourself honest and good, dear; it is your surroundings that are not healthy. Get away from them!"

Miss Cranston laughed drearily.

"I have lived so long in them that I could not exist in any other. The atmosphere is a subtle poison that stimulates, and as it does, one drinks in larger quantities. I wish I were a weepy woman, Chester; I should love to cry now, but somehow I never can! I am glad my last evening alone with you is so beautiful. You will go away the day after to-morrow, and the next time we meet everything will be different. Next spring I shall drive through here with someone not at all like you, Chester. Other men seem to have unbounded belief in their own cleverness, and our conversation will undoubtedly be repartee, which sounds well and means nothing. It will enervate one's mind as the spring weather does one's muscles. I—I believe there are tears in my eyes, Chester. Fancy! One might think I had a heart instead of only an organ that pumps blood! Tears make one's eyes red, don't they? It is so long since I cried that really I have forgotten! Don't [illegible] the horses with the whip, dear; they will not stand it! I wish I did not care so much for you, Chester; why did you make me honour and respect you? Perhaps I might have loved you otherwise—as other women love!"

"I do not want love without honour and respect," the man said sternly.

"No, I know you do not; that is why I give them. That is arguing in a circle, is it not? Perhaps some time I shall love some man without those; women can do strange things. I believe I shall try! It would be novel and interesting, perhaps, and so few things are that. I tried smoking, but it left such a rank odour in one's hair and clothes; and I went to a gay supper once where the women drank quantities of champagne, and I poured mine on the floor. *Chester!*"

The whip had fallen with a stinging lash across the horses' backs, and with a bound that nearly tore the reins from the man's hands they sprang forward beyond control.

The woman spoke again quietly as though nothing unusual was happening:

"The road is on a cliff, Chester, and just above it turns sharply. We shall probably go over there; it is rocky below!"

But the man's strength was concentrated in an effort to pull in the animals, and he made no answer.

"If only we can be killed and not horribly injured! There—there is the turn!" Miss Cranston said, still with the same manner.

"Jump!" the man said. "It is death to go over!" He dropped the reins and tore back the rug from her knees to leave her free, but she only looked at him and smiled, though her pallor was ghastly.

"Perhaps not," she whispered. "And what does it matter?"

With a plunge the horses went over, dragging the trap with them.

The searching party found them the next morning. The woman was huddled face down. Her neck was broken, they said afterwards. The man's left arm was about her waist and the other was stretched out as though to ward off a blow. His face was drawn and strained, but hers was perfectly serene.

Death is sometimes easier than life. B. S. R.

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The Mines of Mars.

LUCIEN was hungry. He looked with sick-hearted envy at the crowd of comfortably dressed people turning the corner of the Strand and Trafalgar Square, and wondered if any individual there had ever known, or would ever sink, to his level of destitution. Two months before he too, well dressed and indifferent to misery as any of them, had turned here nightly on his way home. Two months! It seemed more like two centuries since he had known the taste of food.

He walked on for a short distance in an aimless way, stopping now and then to hug a lamp-post in front of a restaurant and eye, with wolfish desire, the contents of the window, the sight of the viands almost maddening him. He decided that he must beg or die.

Driven by that terrible gnawing pain within him, he made two or three unheeded efforts to induce someone to take pity on him. Then he backed into a narrow doorway, and watched for some face which looked benevolent enough to encourage an application to its owner.

"I shall be found here in the morning, dead," he murmured.

Something over his head creaked as if in answer to his words. Looking up he saw a sign, suspended over the door, bearing two words: "Harold, Clairvoyant."

"Clairvoyant," muttered the beggar. "They make money—they find food and a bed by clairvoyance. I have always had that gift, and have amused many a room-full of people with it. It was not respectable in my eyes to use it for money though," he added bitterly. "I would try it gladly now in exchange for a crust."

A hand fell on his shoulder.

"I have heard what you have spoken," said a voice in English but with a strong foreign accent. "If it is true that you have clairvoyant powers and are starving, it is well for me. I need you."

Lucien's heart gave a bound. Whoever needed him would feed him. He looked eagerly at the speaker.

He was a tall, thin man, dressed in black. He had a pale, severe face, and light, hard eyes. His moustache and hair were black as ink, and his expression was resolute and cold.

"The service must be done fasting," continued the stranger. "But do not look so cast down. It will be brief, and you will feel nothing while you are engaged upon it. Meat, wine, and clothing for an hour's use of your clairvoyant faculty, and beyond that money to start you in a way to live. Come or stay."

The stranger started to go. The desperate man in the doorway made an effort to follow.

"Not so fast!" he cried, and the stranger paused, and gave him his arm.

"You seem to be very weak," remarked the latter, with an appearance of satisfaction.

"Weak! What day is this?" asked Lucien.

"Saturday."

"Well, since Wednesday I have not eaten, and then only——"

"Good! No meat then, I hope?"

"No. Only a roll and some tea."

"Better! When did you last eat meat?"

"I cannot remember."

"Best of all."

In a few minutes the two entered a tram-car. Lucien did not know the locality in which they alighted. The stranger led him a short distance and halted before a dark, tall building at a corner, entered a narrow door by means of a key, and proceeded to ascend the stairs. Lucien followed him, more than once compelled by weakness to sit down for rest, while his companion waited impatiently. The place appeared deserted save for themselves, silent but for the sound of their footsteps, and it was so dark they had to feel their way. They reached the top floor at last, and the stranger led his companion into a room dimly lighted with gas, and shut the door.

The room faced the east and had on that side an unsashed window reaching from the floor to the middle of the ceiling, commanding the heavens from horizon to zenith. In front of this window was mounted a small telescope, which was converted into a peculiar instrument by a globe a foot in diameter attached to its eye-piece. This globe was apparently of copper, covered with glass. An electrical apparatus occupied a shelf on the right of the window, and seven wires extending from this pierced in a semi-circle the upper side of the globe.

The arrangement of the wires in the interior was, of course, invisible, but a thick wire emerged from an aperture in the lower side of the globe, extended a

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few inches in a straight line, and was then unravelled. Its seven strands were each about six inches in length, and were arranged in a sort of claw-shaped cluster, the tips pointing downwards and each encased in a reddish opaque bulb.

The stranger removed the globe, carefully adjusted the telescope to bear upon some celestial object, and set in motion a mechanical contrivance intended to maintain, by a clockwork movement, the focus of the instrument. Then, after replacing the globe, he manipulated for an instant the electrical apparatus, and by a series of springs closed the window aperture with outside shutters of wood that were so constructed as to leave a slit for the path of the telescope. Then he turned out the gas.

For a moment the room was entirely dark. Then about the claw of wire appeared a light, so dim as to be scarcely visible. Slowly, very slowly, this brightened. Seven red points were seen glimmering like stars of the 13th magnitude, gradually expanding till they resembled those of the first. Brighter and brighter became the light. The points glowed like spots of fire.

"That light is the light of Mars," said the stranger. "Now, it is not my intention to enter into long explanations, which circumstances do not require. It will suffice if I say that it is my conviction that light is a fluid which contains the essences of those things that have been steeped in it. Investigation has taught me that just as the primitive rays of light differ in their degrees of luminosity and their temperature, so they do in their power of absorbing the principles of those things which do not absorb them. The red ray possesses this quality in the highest degree. The great preponderance of this ray in the light of Mars directed me to the clairvoyant study of that planet. I have managed to isolate the red ray in his light, and also to concentrate it to such a degree that it is to a clairvoyant of any power an open book.

"Certain things have been revealed to me by the aura of the planet, but it is my wish to verify my observations. In my clairvoyance, the perceptive faculties alone are emancipated from bodily thrall; but I should be a poor psychometrist if I did not recognise in you one whose entire intelligent self can be projected to any distance. Will, reason, conscience, and perception are all exercised. For years I have sought a helper like you—one both highly gifted and desperate. I know you are in acute distress, and will spare you further talk; we shall proceed at once to business. What I wish you to do is to place yourself in this chair, and travel in spirit those light beams—to go to Mars, and to remember what you see there."

"I hunger," murmured Lucien. "Bread!"

"If you were to eat now your usefulness might be destroyed. The animal forces which have to be overcome in an experiment of this kind are in you extremely enfeebled by starvation. Do you not know why the prophets of old time fasted before they attempted to commune with superior powers?"

Lucien yielded. He dragged himself to a chair, so placed that when he was seated in it the circle of lights was before and slightly above his eyes. The light of Mars streamed over the emaciated face of the beggar. The grim stranger stood with his hand stretched out towards Lucien and waited.

As easily as we step from one room to another, swiftly as the soul passes from time to eternity, the intelligent part of Lucien passed over a scarlet path to a new land—a land with vegetation of soft rosy colour, and skies of pale gold and emerald. A land where the pyramid seemed to be nature's ideal of form, all vegetation striving to reach it, from the seeds on the moss-like grass to trees of wondrous stature. The clairvoyant perceived that even roots took this form. He saw no animals. He travelled inconceivable distances in a second of time, and observed, with the perspicuity of the bodiless, many mysterious things. He saw great cities in which there were moving objects that looked like people walking. He found it impossible to approach these places, for some invisible cause prevented, and he could make no more progress against it than an insect can against a gale of wind.

Finally, after many of these failures, he saw in the distance a place where building seemed to be going on and a host of shining creatures moved busily about. Lucien endeavoured to draw near, and succeeded. In fact, the force that had before impeded, now gently impelled him forward.

A cluster of enormous buildings lay in the centre of a plain. The body of each house resembled a great cylinder lying upon the ground. Graceful projections and airy ornaments gave many of them the appearance of stupendously large brilliant insects. Others were of cylinders so combined as to present geometrical figures, the triangle being especially prominent. The buildings were all of a luminous rock, thickly studded with glittering points of light. Lucien was dazzled by their magnificence and their harmonious but mighty proportions. The plain was bordered on two sides by wide streams of opalescent liquid, flowing in straight lines parallel to each other, towards regions unexplored by Lucien.

In one spot many beings were busy with the erection of a building that promised to be grander than any of the others. Lucien was amazed to see that the inhabitants were much like men in form, but finer. The difference consisted in a superior delicacy and symmetry of form, an increase in the size of the head and of the brightness of the eyes. They had no hair, but their heads were enveloped in a soft yellow radiance like the halos of saints. Every form was enrobed in a network of cobweb-like threads of fiery brightness, which proceeded from the radiant head-covering, and was the only raiment. Lucien could not tell whether this was an emanation or an overshadowing light, but it awed him so that he felt great fear when one of the beings, who appeared to be the director of the work at the building, approached him.

"Be not afraid," said this person, in a sweet voice. Lucien felt his fear dispelled, and his amazement was increased.

"Do you speak Earth's language here?" he asked.

"I am of the seventh order," replied the Martian, "and your method of communicating with others must be known to me. Welcome, man! You are the only visitor your planet has sent us in 5,000 of its years. The last from there spake in this tongue."

He repeated some words unintelligible to Lucien, although the latter knew Sanskrit, Hebrew, ancient Greek, and many modern languages.

"I was governor here then, but was only of the sixth order. The visitor, who was of the ninth, left an inscription here which I hope to comprehend after my next promotion. He passed on to one of the outer stars."

The Martian led Lucien to a spot where the wall of one of the buildings was smooth, and showed him two

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words written there with grey pigment. Lucien could not read the words, but he remembered that he had once seen writing like it on a tablet supposed to be of antediluvian date.

His awe returned. "Who could the writer have been?" he said to himself, "and what place is this?"

The last question was instantly answered by his companion. "This is the Hall of Beginning," said he. "Those enrolled here are of the first, or birth, order."

"It seems, then, that there are births here, though not deaths," soliloquised Lucien.

The Martian smiled. For the first time it was borne in upon Lucien's mind that between his conductor and the busy creatures about him was a vast difference. He was grander than they, and the halo about his head burnt with a white lustre.

The Martain did not interrupt these thoughts. Lucien noticed that from time to time his companion turned his face towards some portion of the group of workers, and the radiance over his head deepened, while a sort of flash passed over the delicate covering of his body. This was always followed by the manifestation of new activity by those builders towards whom the attention of the director had been turned. This indicated to Lucien that spoken language was not used for the communication of thought. Other observations convinced him that most of the faculties indispensable to man were superseded by higher powers known to the Martians.

The work in progress was most interesting to Lucien. Some of the workmen were moulding transparent cement into great blocks that looked like concave-convex lenses. Others covered the surface of these blocks with shining dust. Still others dug great gleaming pebbles out of the ground, which were quickly polished and set in the blocks in patterns. The speedy drying of the cement held them firmly in place.

"What are those beautiful bright stones?" asked the visitor.

"In your world they are called diamonds," answered the Martian.

This reply so excited the man, that he lost his self-control. The shining landscape seemed to recede, and he himself to slip down an inclined plane of light to an incredible depth.

"Gently, gently!" said a cold voice in his ear. "Do not struggle so. Now sit up and tell what you have seen."

The clairvoyant stared wildly. With the return of bodily consciousness came pain and weakness like that of the approach of death. The inexorable face of the strange man was close to his own, and its expression destroyed all hope that his misery would be relieved till after the last command was obeyed, and Lucien complied.

"The stones are there, then?" exclaimed the stranger. "It was no mere dream of mine."

He paced the floor with an appearance of great excitement—the first that he had shown. The other man, crouched beside the chair, looked at his employer and trembled. Suppose the man should not keep his word, but should turn him out in the night to die? His head swam and the floor seemed to undulate before his eyes at this thought.

"My friend," said the stranger, stopping suddenly, "your work is but half done. You must return again to Mars."

"Not now," said the other, trembling still more violently. "To-morrow—any time you choose, but not to-night. I could not live to return. If you are a man with a soul, give me food and let me rest."

The voice of the clairvoyant had sunk to a feeble whisper. For a moment the stranger seemed to hesitate, and he regarded Lucien with a gaze in which anxiety mingled with annoyance. But this indecision soon passed.

"There is no time like the present," he said resolutely. "Go again to the master of the Hall of Beginning. Beseech him to enable you, by means of this superhuman power, to bring a handful of those shining stones to the earth for the use of one in need of means for a holy purpose. Go!"

Once more Lucien obeyed. It was harder than before to bring his faculties into obedience, and when started upon that road of light, passage was more difficult. But at last he reached the building beside the diamond mine. The builders were at rest under a pyramidical tree. They looked like green flies upon the red turf. The master stood by the old, old inscription written by the man from the earth, and seemed to study it.

He smiled upon Lucien. "So you have come to put on the vestments cast off by him who has just been promoted. Welcome!"

He pointed to what would be called on earth the corpse of a man. It was lying cold and white upon the ground. Its halo was gone and its golden garment.

Lucien understood. His unhampered intelligence had learned far, far more about that world than has ever been told. The opportunity opened before him, like the door of a refuge from want and care. It offered not death, but life in a land where selfish labour was ignoble, where all toiled for the good of all.

"Gladly, oh, master, will I come!" murmured Lucien.

All the sorrows he had endured were forgotten, the hardness born of his trials passed away, his heart was soft, even towards the unfeeling man who waited for him afar off.

"There is one who sent me here for a purpose," he said to the Martian.

"It is known to me," replied the latter. "His wish is not altogether selfish. Let him have his desire."

* * * * *

The strange, dark man waited impatiently for the return of his messenger. Long, long he waited. Once the emaciated form in the chair stirred slightly, but settled again, immediately, into a stillness like that of death.

"Suppose he should be dead, poor wretch," said the man to himself, his face blanching.

The thought returned again and again. Fear grew upon the man. Hastily disconnecting his apparatus, he opened the window, admitting the light of the rising moon, and the bracing night air, turned the face of the clairvoyant towards it, and put milk mingled with wine to the pallid lips. Lucien moved no more.

"Heavens!" exclaimed the man. "He is dead!"

It was even so. The body was already growing cold.

For a moment the stranger trembled. Then his habitual nerve seemed to return. He moved the corpse in order to arrange it decently, and as he did this, some objects fell from its hands to the floor. The rays of the moon streaming in fell upon seven great white pebbles, and were reflected with indescribable splendour.

Shenley Parr.

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A Clay Idol.

It was universally conceded that Bill Kingerty was the toughest character in Lone Rock. The stage-driver told me as much before we had gone three miles from the station on our fifty mile drive to camp.

"Tough?" he said. "I should say yes. Always plays in great luck, drinks lots of whisky, spends a bushel of money, and is mighty handy with his gun. Whatever you do, tenderfoot, don't run up against Bill Kingerty."

I told him I didn't intend to run up against anyone, least of all a man who was "handy" with his gun.

We arrived at Lone Rock the next morning, and I must confess the town did not make a very favourable impression on my English sensibilities.

The largest building in town was the Inter-Ocean Saloon, a long low building of rough boards, thrown together in true frontier style. The camp had grown up in a day, as it were, when the placer fields were discovered, a mile or so up the cañon. The floating population of the whole territory had flocked hither, and what a month before was as lonely a gulch as could be found in the Rockies, was now a flourishing "city" of several hundred.

As I wandered into the Inter-Ocean that evening, the stage-driver, who was standing near the door, recognised me, and drawing closer, whispered:

"There's Bill Kingerty over yonder at the farther table. Remember, stranger, and don't run up against him."

I looked in the direction indicated, and saw a large-boned, roughly-dressed man of perhaps fifty, seated at a parlour table, playing cards. His wide slouch hat was pulled down over his eyes, so that only the lower part of his face was visible. His chin was covered with a grizzly growth of reddish-grey hair. There was a goodly stock of gold at his elbow, to which he added now and then as the game went on. It was evident that the stage-driver was right about Bill Kingerty's luck.

The scene before me was new and strange. From a secluded place in a dark corner of the room I watched the motley crowd singing, drinking, and gambling. Now and then some especially lucky player would cash in, and, advancing to the rough board counter answering for a bar, call up the crowd and set up the liquor. I had not been noticed in my dark corner until later in the evening a tall, sinewy cowboy scooped a great pile of gold into his pockets, and advancing to the bar, threw down a handful and called up everybody.

Glancing about the room, with a glass of the reddest of red liquor in his hand, he spied me.

"Hey, there, tenderfoot," he shouted, "what are you skulking in that corner for? Come up here and have something."

I advanced meekly into the light, and hardly knowing what I said or did, replied: "If you will excuse me, I will take a cigar instead."

"Cigar," he roared, and pouring out a brimming glass of whisky, handed it to me with the words, "take that and drink it, quick."

"Really," I said in my fright, "I don't care for this. Pray excuse me and I'll smoke a cigar instead."

"Cigar be hanged," he sneered, "drink that liquor," and, pulling a six-shooter from his belt, he pointed it at my head.

I looked at the gleaming muzzle in terror. The mouth of the barrel looked to my frightened senses as large as a drain-pipe. The drawn, hardened face of the man behind it looked fiendish.

"Really——" I stammered. "Drink," he shouted. I raised the glass to my lips and gulped down a mouthful. The fiery stuff choked me, and, throwing it up, I went into a paroxysm of coughing.

The crowd surged about me, laughing and shrieking, when the cowman waved his weapon over his head, fired a couple of shots through the roof, and, pointing it at me again, shouted: "Drink it down, tenderfoot, drink it down or I'll finish you."

As I raised the glass again, Bill Kingerty stepped forward and walked up to my assailant with the words: "That's enough of that, stranger. Put up that gun, and let the boy alone."

The cow-puncher didn't know Kingerty, and, besides, he was half drunk. Without a reply he turned suddenly, and, pointing his revolver at Kingerty's breast, fired.

I don't know to this day how it was. I was never brave or heroic. In fact, I am a beastly coward, but, nevertheless, as the cowboy fired, I leapt forward, and, striking the gun, threw up the barrel. His bullet sped harmlessly over Kingerty's head.

I didn't realise that there was but one shot; but when the smoke cleared away the cowboy lay dead

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upon the floor, and the smoke was still floating from Bill Kingerty's gun. The cowboy's partner came forward and took charge of the body, but did not speak to Kingerty.

As I started to leave the place, Kingerty laid his hand on my arm, and drew me to the door and down the street to the shanty where he lived. He opened the rickety door, and, entering, lighted a candle, placed it on a box, and, pushing me a stool, bade me be seated.

"Stranger," he began, after clearing his throat, "what are you doing out here? You've no business in this country. Why, sonny, you're the biggest tenderfoot I've ever seen."

I threw off all restraint—for there was a kindly light in his rugged face—and told him my story. How I had just left college, and, lacking the necessary money to pursue the study of medicine as I wished, had come West to make my fortune, hoping to go back in a few years and take up my chosen profession.

Kingerty was silent after I had told my story, and, by the flashing light of the candle, I could see he was in deep meditation.

"So you come from England," he at length began, "and to make your fortune." He turned uneasily in his chair, and, looking me full in the face, continued: "My boy, go home; you're not fitted for this life out here. If you stay here you'll either get tough or get shot, or both. If you're tough you won't save any money. If you're dead the cash won't do you much good. I knew a boy who came West, the same as you, only a few years ago. He came from London, too. This chap had finished school, and, carried away with the stories of the wealth to be gained in the West, packed up his things and came out here.

"He was ambitious to be rich and honoured, and so left his own country with its limited chances and long, uphill pull, to make his fortune in the western goldfields. Neither his aged parents nor his sweetheart were able to dissuade him from this foolhardy step. He told his little flaxen-haired sweetheart that last night at home that he would soon return with wealth and power, and pictured how happy they would be in the home he would be able to furnish for her. And he went away."

As he finished these words his voice was low and husky, and I could see in the dim light that he was looking far beyond me, through the open door and out towards the mountains, towering dim and majestic in the eastern sky, his face was wonderfully softened, and I could hardly realise in the man that now stood before me the murderer of an hour before.

"I knew the boy well," he continued, "perhaps better than his own parents. Well he came West and for a few months kept up and saved money. The frequent letters from home and the little souvenir his sweetheart had given him seemed to keep him from the temptation which surrounded him. Then came the long winter when we were snowed in and for months received no mail. The absence of word from home and loved ones seemed to press heavily upon him. He became sullen and morose—then came cards, and whisky, and perdition. When the snow melted and the delayed stage arrived, he, fallen to a common roustabout at the saloons, read that his sweetheart had died during the long winter—died in his mother's arms, and in the wild delirium of brain fever had begged him not to go—oh, not to go away.

"Thus was broken what seemed the only chain that bound him to decency.

"Then he drifted with the wild, turbulent current of western life through this camp, and that, a drunkard, a murderer, and a gambler."

We sat in silence. Kingerty's sad dreamy eyes were fixed on space, and it seemed I could see a teardrop glistening on his rugged cheek. He turned to me, and laying a hand on my shoulder as a father might, continued: "Boy, go home. Work at anything if needs be to gain your end, only don't sever yourself from good influences, from an early training, from a Christian home."

I rose and grasped his hand, too much overcome by my emotions for words. As I started for the door he said:

"No, my boy, don't go up to the hotel. It might not be safe. Bunk in here with me."

I lay awake far into the night. Suddenly riches seemed to me of little value now, when associated with constant temptation. I had just money enough to get back. I would go on the morrow.

I must have been asleep several hours when I was awakened by a shot. I leapt from my bunk. The sun was just peeping over the mountains. A cowboy stood a few rods from the door, a smoking Winchester in his hands. Bill Kingerty lay across the doorstep, dead.

I laid him out myself for a decent burial. Suspended from his neck by a slight golden chain was a locket. The bullet that had pierced his breast had broke it open. Inside, clotted with Bill Kingerty's lifeblood, was a lock of flaxen hair.

P. McArthur.

Jumbled Story Competition.

No. 15.

On pages 470-71 appears a story, each line of which is numbered. The lines are all in their wrong position, and the prizes mentioned below are offered to those who write on a sheet of paper the numbers of the lines in the order most nearly correct. The title is jumbled up, and should be correctly given *and pasted on the paper containing the effort.*

The conditions are jumbled in the following paragraph as an example. The correct order of the lines is given in line 10.

1 SHORT STORIES on or before *Monday,*
2 awarded to the readers whose solutions first
3 *JUMBLED STORY.*
4 Four Prizes—one of £5 and three of £1 each—are
5 *October 12th,* and envelopes must be marked
6 correct. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be
7 reach this office.
8 All attempts to be delivered at the offices of
9 offered to the readers whose keys are most nearly
10 4—9—6—2—7—8—1—5—3—12—11—13—10.
11 a sheet of paper the figures in the order they
12 Competitors in doing the story should write on
13 believe to be correct, thus:

£2 is offered to the reader living in Ireland, who, in the event of a tie, succeeds in forwarding the correct solution before other competitors posting attempts from Ireland.

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KEY TO JUMBLED STORY No. 12.

ACCEPTED.

See Page 480.

There were many men besides Jack Foster keenly anxious to have their pictures taken that year; maybe there were many better pictures than his, but no one had a more beautiful woman to paint. His bride of less than a year made him the most perfect Hero that ever watched for Leander.

With hair half unbound she stood, a dark, proud goddess, watching, with an unfathomable look of longing in her glorious eyes, that try as he would Foster could never quite transfer to canvas.

"Sweetheart, you are not so well to-day," he said tenderly, a few days before his picture was finished, as he stopped suddenly in his work. "You must see a doctor."

"Not yet, Jack," she pleaded. "It is only a little cold, and if he were to forbid my posing! What should we do then? This picture is to make your name and lead to endless commissions and bring you ever so much money, isn't it?"

The man crossed over and kissed her softly, and the girl went on:

"When you have sent it in, dear, then I will see a doctor. Go on painting, I am quite rested. Is my hand right? I am afraid I turned my head."

The Artist put the girl into position again and for the first time noticed how fragile she had grown, and an almost too ethereal beauty in her eyes.

The picture was finished and sent in before she consented to see a doctor. And when he shook his head and talked gravely of Davos Platz she laughed gaily.

"This feverishness is only anxiety to know the fate of our picture," she said afterwards, in reply to her husband's anxious look.

"Sir James Parker saw it one day and offered me a hundred guineas for it if it is hung."

"Then if it's accepted that means it is sold as well. Oh, Jack, if they only take it."

"Yes, darling, if they take it it means Davos Platz for you and commissions innumerable for me; for Parker does not do things by halves."

The days passed with no news from Burlington House, but Dr. Clayton came again and again, and at each visit was more importunate that his patient should go to a dryer climate. "London was too relaxing—most important if organic mischief were to be prevented. Delay now might result in hæmorrhage and actual disease."

So Foster did what he had sworn he would never do; he wrote to Evelyn's father and told him how much depended on money now. The letter came back unopened, and then Foster went to a friend and borrowed. It was only a small sum, for the man was poor—probably if he had been rich he would not have lent him anything. But it saw them safely settled at Davos Platz, and Jack watched the colour come back to Evelyn's cheeks, and her old buoyancy return, and the far away look died out of her eyes. Now if only his picture were taken all might be well, and he watched for the posts eagerly.

He had gone into a shop to buy her some roses, and until a shrill cry made him look round he thought she was by his side. Then he saw a runaway horse dashing madly down the street, and directly in its way a tiny child—dirty and unkempt, but still a child; while half-way across the road, with arms outstretched to save it, was Evelyn.

Before he could move the tragedy was over—the child thrown out of harm's way; the fragile rescuer senseless on the ground. [*Put as 96 in original story.*

An hour later the doctors had completed their examination and given their verdict: "No possible chance of life; a week, even longer perhaps—but that is all."

Foster took the news as one stunned. The surgeon rubbed his glasses and continued:

"I shall be here again later, but I am afraid there is nothing to be done."

"Nothing to be done." Jack Foster sat motionless.

He was not allowed to go to his wife yet; while he waited a maid brought in a letter. He opened it mechanically, and read without understanding it, but the contents grew clear to him as he stared at it:

"Accepted!" he cried; then his agony was sharp enough. He realised everything.

"To lose her on the point of winning all. Oh, God, it is too hard; I cannot bear it."

The days passed slowly and Jack Foster scarcely left his wife's bedside. At the end came the return of consciousness, and she smiled faintly at him as he kissed the death damp from her brow.

"Your picture, Jack?" she breathed.

"It has been taken, little one." His voice was husky, but well under control.

"I am so glad, darling. I did bring you luck after all, you see," she whispered, and the smile on her face deepened into absolute radiant content; and at first Jack Foster did not realise that the lips he pressed so tenderly heeded not his passionate kisses.

* * * * *

"In this world," muttered Foster to himself the day after the funeral, "things are horribly unequal and unjust. When success means everything she stays away. When I no longer need or welcome her she comes." In the bitterness of his soul he half crushed a letter that he held unopened in his hand.

"How she would have rejoiced over my first varnishing ticket; and the irony of it that it should come now."

He opened the envelope carelessly and drew out not the ticket but a request that he would send for his picture "as the Committee regret to find they have not space to hang it."

"Sometimes Fate's little jokes are not so unkind after all," he murmured.

C. M. Bryant.

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OR,

The Romance of a Lost Continent.

By Geo. C. Wallis, Author of "*The Winning of Gunhild*," etc.

SUMMARY.

Arnon's memory of his early days begins at a time when he finds himself abandoned on the seashore, whence he discovers the cave of a band of pirates by whom he is captured. Under the care of Didron the Chief he grows up as one of them, and on the death of the former he takes command. Viol is the daughter of Didron and in love with Arnon.

CHAPTER III.

The Sacred Sleeper.

It is said by the wise men of the Temple of Truth, whose voices the people heed less than they heed the careless twittering of the forest birds, that idleness doth ever lead to evil, and that a mind untroubled with labour is ever distraught to seek out new pathways of vice. So it was with many of my men in those months of pleasure, but I was otherwise employed.

I loved, was married, and became a father before the time was gone, therefore my idle hours were few and far between. Moreover, I purposed that my next cruise should make us richer by far than the dreams of the wildest greed, and so was busy with the preparing of weapons and the instruction of our novices in the use of the double-thong sling, then a new implement of war to us, and in making a great quantity of poison wherewith to touch our arrows and swords when we came to close quarters with a foe. This latter was a work of patience and of time, since the fruit of the wild almond tree* (from which we distilled the deadly liquid) must be gathered before the full bloom of ripeness is upon it, so that the fleshy covering of the kernel be hard and juicy, and in that tropic isle, so many trees were blossoming, ripening, and seeding, side by side, that we must wait until enough for our purpose could be gathered as their time fell due.

But 'tis of thyself thou shouldst be telling; so straightway to it, Arnon the Wanderer!

There is a secluded spot on the western shore of our island, away from the din of the settlement and the eyes of the settlers, where it was Viol's wont to wander when the days were bright—which was nearly always—and where, also, I might often be found.

There the waves, that out to sea are glittering hillocks of sapphire, break in high columns of creamy foam on rocky, lovely inlets and promontories, thick grown with tangled bush and palm, growing so near the water that they and the fronds and cocoas are wet with the salt sea-spray as the liquid rollers curl and fall. Out into the water jut crags of limestone, hung over with boughs of light feathery foliage, contrasting sharply with the long thatch branches behind, with which are intermingled, but very sparsely, the green ebony and the wild liquorice, whose scarlet seeds with black tops dance in the gentle breeze with an eerie motion. Behind these, again, as the outposts of the forest, stand groves of palms with their spear-fringed branches, the yellow-blossomed aloes, the clinging convolvuli, the arrow-root, and the almond.

There the mavis sings, and the gaily-feathered tribe dart ever here and there in amazing numbers, and the bright banana-bird sails swiftly over the trees. There the air is ever rich with a thousand perfumes, sweeter by far than the costly essences of the merchants of Ind, and the ear is ever soothed by a thousand pleasant sounds. There it was I made my love to Viol when the two months' mourning

*It is a curious fact that the delicious peach, which grows upon our sunny garden walls, is botanically the same, developed by ages of selection to a harmless fruit.

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was past, and there she looked her love into my eyes for the last time.

It chanced one day, as we sat hand in hand upon one of the great stones that jut out of the shallow grit where the sand-crabs live, our senses drinking in the beauty and the sweetness of all things that surrounded us, the roar of the surf being stilled to a soothing murmur, that the Spirit of Love came into our hearts.

Before we knew it, without a word having passed between us, we were clasped in each other's arms, and our lips had met in a passionate kiss, and so, silent as we were, we continued for a time, finding no language for our thoughts, nor needing any. Then, putting me gently from her, Viol took my hands in her soft, warm palms, and asked me in tones that told me she knew what the answer would be:

"Shall that be our betrothal kiss, my Arnon?"

"Dear one," I answered, drawing her to me again and once more sealing the compact, "it was, and from now henceforth nothing shall come between us twain save the shadow of death."

"So be it," she answered softly.

It passes my comprehension, even now, how it came about that such a pure and lovely flower as my golden-haired Viol should have been born and grown to womanhood amid that rough and bloody band of pirates, untouched, unsullied by their wickedness, and withal, so innocent of evil word or deed. She seemed like a fair white lily, sprung up in the midst of noxious, miasmatic weeds and tangled thorns. But the ways of the Spirit of Life are past our finding out, and his purposes veiled from our eyes. Sometimes his acts seem evil and his deeds seem dark, but know we not, from the Sacred Book of the Soul, that this evil and this darkness is only the shadow of a greater light? And when his ways seem good to us, shall we not bask in the sunshine of his smile, asking no questions, wasting not our breath in needless amaze?

So I took Viol to be my wife, and three months after we had buried her father, my foster-parent, the old priest whom we had brought to live with us to be of service on such occasions, joined our hands in wedlock, in the name of the Three Spirits, which yet are one Spirit—the Spirits of Life, and Truth, and Love. And after him we repeated the bridal vow that has done duty at the union of man and maid for a thousand years or more. Thus it runs:

> By the loves we love who love us,
> By the Spirits throned above us,
> (By the Gods who never perish)
> By the things our fancies cherish,
> By the hopes our soul-self longs for,
> And the friends we sing our songs for,
> May we ever steadfast be:
> Mated for eternity.

In due time a child was born to us, a son whom we named Didron, after his mother's father, and because his features, even when so young, resembled the old sea-king's wonderfully. Then, having tired of the joys of idleness, I got ready to set forth on my cruise.

This time I was the chief, and the good old *Ravager*, upon whose deck I trod so proudly, was my own ship, manned and prepared as she had never been before. I had stored sufficient food to last us near a year, and besides our hundred slaves to row the ship, I had fifty as a reserve, and resolved to treat them better than usual, so that I might get more work out of their bones. Also, with the remnant of Sanaboul's crew and our young novices, I had more than two hundred and fifty strong and healthy men on board, sworn to my service through fire or water, even to the end of death itself.

The day of our departure came, and I sought out Viol to bid her good-bye. Finding her not in the house, nor the child either, I searched here, there, everywhere, in all the houses of the settlement, in the forest, and lastly—tardy fool!—bethought me of the trysting-place where we had joined our lips in betrothal. Tearing through copse and bush, o'erleaping many a purling rill, and threading my

"Shall that be our betrothal kiss?"

way between the giant trees, guided by the swiftly-increasing thunder of the surf upon the white rock shore, I hastened to that lovely spot. There she sat, the babe upon her knee, lulling it to sleep with the music of the waves, and the soft sighing of the sultry breeze.

"The men are waiting, Viol," I cried somewhat impatiently, for my hands longed to grasp the tiller again, "Knew you not that I was searching you?"

"Hush, husband!" she answered, gently, "or you will wake the child. Yes, I knew you would search me out to say farewell, and wished that we said it here, where our betrothal kiss was given. Mindst thou that day, my husband? nay, stay me not! I have a thought, I know not from which of the spirits, that this will be our last meeting this side of the shades, and I would like it to be here, where we have passed so many happy hours."

"A plague upon such silly, idle fancies!" I exclaimed angrily. "I will not say 'farewell.' It shall but be 'good-bye.'"

"Nay, be not angry, dear one," my wife replied, laying the child, still asleep, upon a mossy bed, and clasping my neck with her white arms, "but think of this if so it happens that you cannot come back to me, as I fear you will not, husband . . . . and so, farewell!"

I kissed her long and tenderly, softened somewhat by her words, then, stooping, touched the lips of the sleeping Didron, and in another moment, with a wave of my hand, I had broken away into the forest and was gone.

Thus in coldness, if not in wrath, I parted from Viol for the last time. From that day to this my eyes have never seen her again, and at times she has been blotted out of my thought, so mindless is the soul of a past or distant love.

We sailed the *Ravager* far and wide, taking many a heavy-laden ship from the shores of the land of the south, and from the city of Kronos, chasing many a pleasure vessel cruising round the coast, laying tribute heavily upon the sea-shore towns, and ever watchful for sight of a royal ship.

We had been five months out when a barque with wide-spreading sails, labouring deeply in the water because of her heavy cargo, hove in sight, and was running across our bows before her crew discovered the nature of our ship. There was a stiff gale blowing, so I thought to trap her easily, seeing she had few oars, but as well might the sloth seek to overtake the fleet-footed deer or the tortoise to outrun the squirrel, as the *Ravager* to come up with that flying craft. We chased her for an hour or more, but by then the sky had swallowed her up, and she was gone from our grasp.

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I fumed as I walked the deck in impotent rage, and resolved to take my revenge on Miropis, a wealthy town on the shore of Atlantis. Thither our prow was turned, the crew in high spirits thereat, smelling spoil and sport ahead.

As we neared the coast a dark bird flying past being the first sign of land, a storm arose, dreadful while it lasted (which, fortunately, was not long), delaying us for a day, and the loud creaking of the ship's timbers in the heavy sea was held by some of the older sailors to be an evil omen. Later, when we passed a great shoal of porpoises, rolling their shining backs in the flood of sunlight, and later still clouds of flying fishes that skim close to the water for full fifty paces, these also were interpreted as evil signs by the croakers. I laughed them to scorn, as I laughed at Viol, and bade them talk of omens when the hour of death was near, but not vex living men with their old wives' tales.

So we came to Miropis and cast anchor in its little bay, where the cowardly sharks that frighten timid swimmers are famous for their number. Right to the water's edge the land was thick with dense belts of logwood and mangrove, alternating with clumps of bamboo, and showing here and

My answer was short and sharp.

there, between the openings of the trees, about and beyond the town, long stretches of the juicy sugar-canes.

When our anchor dropped, and the few merchant ships that lay in the port had cut their cables and run out to sea (for the name of our ship was a terror), the shores were black with the people, shouting to ask us what we wished with them who were so poor. My answer was short and sharp to those liars.

"Unless you bring on board before sunset," I said, "all the costly jewels and silks that are in the great merchants' houses, and a thousand pieces of gold of the largest size, your town shall be destroyed, your wives and daughters captured, your wealth taken to the uttermost value, though we cast the excess into the sea, and such of your men as resist shall be slain."

It was not long before they accepted my terms. Before the sunset the vast treasure was safely stowed in the hold, my men being very jubilant, thinking me the best of chiefs. 'Tis true the merchants and all from whom the townsfolk took the spoil were highly incensed and even resisted, but the mad fury of a mob seeking its own safety took little account of *their* feelings, many of the robbers, I doubt not, robbing a trifle on their own account, for to some of the poorer class the visit of a pirate was a time for rejoicing rather than sorrowing.

Now it being night before the work was done, we rode at anchor in the bay till morning, when I wished to be going. But some of the men pleaded hard for a walk and a drink ashore, and being young and pliable, I foolishly consented, going with them myself and leaving but two score to guard the slaves and the treasure.

My object in landing, however, was not to drink and revel, but to visit the grotto where lay the famous Sleeper, sacred to the Spirit of Truth, whose priests had established a sanctuary on the spot where the wondrous body lay and had lain, some said, for a thousand years.

Taking only Sassani, a youth of near kin to my foster-father, with me, I left Miropis behind and set out for the famous grotto. Through vast fields of cane and past the cane-built houses of the workers on the farms, we tramped on, our ears filled with the songs of the birds and the low humming of a million insects, and our eyes gazing with delight upon the many gorgeous flowers and blossoms that bestrewed our path. Presently we came to the foot of a black conical rock, rising gaunt and grim out of the level plain, and girt around its base with a dense belt of forest, through which we passed. Then, threading our way with care through the sacred, mazy groves of the spiny cactus as through lines of armed sentinels, we came to the entrance of the sanctuary.

It was not large, and only by stooping low could we scramble in, but once within, we could walk upright again. I spoke to Sassani, but so loudly rang the echo of my voice around the dimly-lighted chamber, that he made no reply, and I forebore from further speech, using my eyes and ears only. This was the sight that we saw when we entered the huge grotto.

From right to left, below and above, the walls and roof and floor seemed to fade away, leaving us standing on the threshold of an awful nothingness. Then, as we got our second sight in the gloom, we perceived that the room was, in very truth, the whole of the huge black rock; that the rock, which outside seemed a solid hill, was but an empty shell, like the drinking-cup of a giant thrown down on the earth with the rim to the ground. And just at the top, at the apex of this hollow pyramid of stone, a little circular piercing let in a shaft of light, which now, it being near the hour of noon, poured almost vertically through the eerie darkness. Following its brilliant course, we saw that it stayed not at our level, but kept its way till lost in the gloom far beneath our feet, and that the cave was quite as large below as above.

For awhile we stood amazed, not knowing whether to stay or to scramble back through the narrow opening. I half turned, when a rope at my side rattled heavily on the wall, and the door closed, leaving us in darkness, save for the sunbeam piercing the gulf like a thin rod of iron heated to a glowing whiteness. Then, just as our hearts were turning to water, and our hands sought each other, not knowing what would happen next, these words fell upon our ears, spoken in a voice that seemed far away, mellowed as by coming through a vaulted space, yet with every syllable as clear as though it were uttered at our side:

"Enter and fear not, oh, Arnon! for the place where the Sleeper sleeps is holy ground!"

I started, for how could the speaker know my name? Still I answered, feeling awed by the mystery of the place:

"I would enter, but see no way, Priest of the Spirit of Truth," for I shrewdly guessed it was a priest who had spoken to us; and at that feeling my pirate blood rising again, I clutched my sword-hilt with new courage. The still, small voice again spoke:

"Take three paces to the right, you and your comrade, and the path shall be made plain before your feet."

We did as the voice requested, but now fearing nothing. As my foot touched the rocky platform on which we stood

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for the third time, a wonderful thing befel. From right and left, above, below, and around, as though a thousand windows had been opened in the stony walls, a thousand lights flashed and shone, revealing to us the secrets of the holy place. Then we perceived the true shape of the grotto, and saw that it was the work of man, of countless generations, each toiling a little in their day, each scooping a little out of the cave until it became as we saw it. It was quite as deep below as it towered above, and we stood at the widest part, on a little ledge of rock from whence a rocky staircase, cut with consummate skill, wound in a spiral curve to the bottom of the abyss. There, at the apex of the vast inverted cone, the ray of sunlight, still visible for all the glowing points of brilliancy around, fell full on a polished brazen shield which lay on the breast of a sleeping man.

This we saw, then slowly and laboriously climbed the winding stair adown until we stood at the side of the couch on which the figure lay. It was a couch of gold inlaid with ivory and precious gems and filagreed with delicate pearl and silver tracery, more costly, I should think, than all the treasure stored in that secret cave of ours. Yet, as we stood there looking upon it, but more upon the Sleeper and upon the two who stood near him—men clad simply in long, white garments, replenishing at intervals a lamp which flickered feebly at his head—not all that wealth roused once the pirate spirit, so deep was the silence and so great the awe of that Presence.

I asked of the two watchers, with bated breath: "What did they there?"

One answered simply, "Wait!" and the other, pointing upwards, "Look!"

Then there was silence again whilst we strained our eyes, peering into the vast vault above, all studded with its thousand lights, till, as though by one consent, a hundred doors opened in the rocky wall at regular distances on the spiral stair.

From these hundred doors came a hundred priests of Truth.

From these hundred doors came the hundred priests of Truth, each dressed as the two watchers, each carrying a lighted lamp, and all, in solemn file, marching down the steps till they reached us; then forming in a circle round us and the Sacred Sleeper, chanting a soft melodious hymn, which, before it ceased, rose into a mighty roar of rolling, echoing sound, soaring majestically to the pointed roof, falling thence again in rhythmic cadences adown the sloping sides, deflected thence from wall across to wall, and meeting in a clash of awful harmony directly overhead.

Osiris! That Sleeper must have slept sound as the dead amid that thunderous roar, nay, methinks it would have woke the very dead! Yet the figure on the golden couch moved not so much as an eyelid, lying there like a thing of stone. Then, wordless, hasteless, the hundred white-robed priests went back the way they came, the measured tread of their sandalled feet reverberating strangely in the cavernous depths.

Now the elder of the two watchers turned to me and spoke:

"It is well, my son, that thou hast come hither, for the Spirit hath told me much concerning thee, some of which thou must know. Thine is no common destiny, though so thou mayest think, for even now thy pirate life is at an end, and thou standeth on the threshold of a fresh career. Gainsay me not, my son, but listen, and time will tell thee whether a Priest of Truth can speak falsely. This is what I would say to thee, for more I dare not reveal.

"Within a year and a half from now, my son, thou wilt be a captive in a foreign land, and then a server of a foreign god, and when thy feet once more tread the shores of Atlantis, it shall be as a great man. Then shalt thou come here for counsel, my son, and once more after that, and for the last time, shalt thou visit the grotto of the Sleeper; but till thou hast been here a third time, fear not death. These are the words that the Spirit of Truth hath uttered by the mouth of Unim."

"A question I would ask you, Unim," I said. "Pray, how came you to know my name when I entered, and how my pirate life can end, seeing my ship yonder in the bay only waits my return to put forth to sea?"

"Verily, my son," answered the watcher, "thy faith in the Spirit is small and thou art young, else wouldst have seen that when the Spirit could tell thy future, he could tell thy name! Nay, more, I can tell thee thy age, though thou knowest it not thyself. 'Tis just twenty-and-three years this day since thou camest forth from the womb of her who bore thee, whose name thou knowest not."

"But what of my pirate life?" I asked, fearing deeply.

"I am coming to that, my son," said he slowly, tantalisingly; "but first, I must tell thee the tradition that has been handed down to us of the sleeper here: *It is foretold that whoso wakes the Sleeper shall bury him, dead truly, in this very spot, and whoso reigneth as King of Atlantis in the day that the Sleeper dies, shall be the last King that shall reign in this land, and the end of the land itself shall not be far away.* Already its doom is sealed and its destruction begun. As to thyself, Arnon, the foster son of Didron, thou wilt no more be a pirate from this day, for already the soldiers and the ships of the king are nigh upon thee, and before sunset thy band will be no more."

"Wretched old man!" I cried, in my ungovernable anger

at the delay, as the thought of Viol, my wife, and Didron, my little one, whom I might never see again if the *Ravager* was lost, came into my mind, "why keep us here with thy foolish prophecies whilst time is passing that I might be out of reach of my enemies?"

"It matters not," said he calmly; "and I forgive thee thy blasphemy, knowing thy mind. But go now, and remember the words of Unim, the priest of Truth."

Whilst he was speaking the other priest had seized the rope that dangled on the wall, and re-opened the door above by pulling away the pivoted stone which had closed it. At the same time the thousand lights went out with startling suddenness, leaving only the thin white ray of sunlight piercing the profound gloom. Guided by the gleam from the open door, Sassani and I groped hurriedly up the tedious stair, gained the platform, and shouting back our curses at the watchers, fled out into the open air, glad to leave that awful place, with its ghastly vastness, far behind.

On we sped with flying feet, through the forest and the cane-breaks, startling the rustics, scaring the birds that built their nests in the shadow of the tall cacti, treading heedlessly down many a waterway wherewith the land was irrigated, and stopping not our headlong course until we reached the town, where, for prudence sake, we went gently till we saw how far our fears were just.

CHAPTER IV.

Briseis.

That the priest had spoken truly regarding the matter we soon discovered, for immediately we stepped into the street leading down to the water-side, we saw two warships standing into the mouth of the bay, and a third landing her five hundred fighting men on a spit of land just outside, with intent to cut off the retreat of the *Ravager's* crew. And also, from the east side of the town, came the shouting of men and the trumpeting of soldiers, and I knew that we were indeed in evil plight. Small mercy is shown to pirates caught in the act, so then and there we resolved to die fighting, rather than fall into the hands of the king's men.

But first we must seek out our men, or such of the besotted wretches as we could, and with the enemy's war-cry ringing in our ears, it was a hurried search. Up and down the streets we ran, in this house and that, hauling the drunken out of the drinking booths—which were many in that bibulous town—out of the acting fairs where painted beauty danced; and ever as we ran we kept up our battle-cry. "*The Arnon! The Arnon!*" Some of the townsfolk, indeed, tried to stop us at the street corners, but keen swords were ever good passports; and slaying or maiming them as we ran, they troubled us little.

At length, and all too soon, the soldiers were in the town, hard at our heels, and when we must turn at bay we gathered in a large house near the shore, and there prepared to die. After casting out the people of the house, I counted the band, and found that for all our speed and noise, there were only seventy, leaving twice as many more to be hunted out and killed like rats in their holes.

Soon the soldiers clustered round the house, assaulting it on both sides (for it stood midway between two narrow streets), but gained no foothold within for more than an hour, so desperately did we keep the doors. From the roof a dozen of my slingers wrought havoc in the narrow ways, till presently, having brought up the greater part of their force, the soldiers occupied the roofs of the houses around and poured such a storm of leaden bullets on our stronghold as struck down the dozen men and battered in the very roof itself.

The streets were full of the soldiers, they swarmed in thousands, and twice they gained the doors with fearful struggles, and twice, with the energy of demons, we wrested back those vantage-points, hurling out the bodies till round each exit was a writhing rampart of human flesh, all bristling with sharp and broken weapons.

Now the enemy paused in their attack and drew back a space, leaving us time to breathe, and numbering my men again, I found I had not two score wherewith to hold the place against the thousands that would soon be thrown upon it. And looking seaward I saw the *Ravager*, with the flag of Atlantis streaming in triumph from her mast, moving slowly out of the harbour. The iron went into my soul when I saw that sight.

Now the soldiers were upon us again, but the pirate's blood was roused and we wrought like fiends, cutting, carving, thrusting, slinging, hurling all the missiles we could lay hands on into the surging mass of men in the streets, tearing down even the stone idols and statuettes in our frenzy of rage and despair. And ever and anon, above the din of the conflict, a death-groan pierced the outer air, telling of the finding out of one of our companions in the town. Bah, the drunken wretches! They deserved their fate who were not with us in that final struggle.

At last the enemy fired the houses on either side our own from the landward street, throwing all their force upon us at the other entrance. Against this new foe neither valour nor strength nor skill availed us aught, so, thinned as we were, we gave back before the fierce rush of the grey-clad soldiers, who, pouring in, penned us in a room near the middle of the house only separated from the raging flames by a wooden wall. Already the boards began to bend and crack, the air was thick with smoke and strong with the reek of burning wood and smouldering cloth, so that we could scarce see one another, save as spectred giants battling in a murky cloud that parched our throats, and ringed our eyes with pain. Presently I paused in my smiting from sheer weariness of arm, and lo! I stood alone, facing a crowd of foes, even Sassani lying dead at my feet.

"Why strive further, Arnon?" asked the foremost foe, a tall and sinewy man whom the others obeyed as an officer, one Vichri by name. "All are dead save you, and 'twere a thousand pities that the flames should claim you for a victim, as they will when we have left you to their mercy. Yield, then, and I promise you a fair trial before the King."

"Never!" I cried. "By all the Gods, Arnon the son of Didron shall never yield whilst his hands are free. Take that, mocker!"

And I aimed a terrible blow at him with my hacked and blood-stained blade. He sprang back, and the stroke fell short, but, nevertheless, the point, still sharp for all the work it had done, sheared off his left ear as neatly as a surgeon's knife.

Just then the wooden wall gave way, and a great tongue of fire leapt across the room, shrivelling the hangings like tinder, and driving the grey-coats a dozen paces back. Then Unim's saying: "Fear not death," flashed suddenly into my mind, and, made mad with blood and despair, I sprang into the roaring furnace of flame and ran across the blazing room beyond, seeking in the waves of fire and smoke for the further door. I felt in that moment as though a myriad keen-jawed beasts had fixed their fangs into my already bruised and bleeding flesh, or as though I were bathing in a sea of the sharpest sword points, so fearful were the gusts of flame that swept around me.

Keeping my eyes closed, I know not how, I sought the door with my blade, found it, hurled myself fiercely upon it, and burst through into a room yet untouched by the fire, beyond which was the street from which the soldiers had withdrawn. Within this room, however, still remained four of the grey-coats, who started at my sudden entrance, all blackened and singed, as though they had seen one from the dead. Not a word of explanation did I stay to give them, but running at the nearest, lopped off his head, pierced the second in the side, cut off the sword hilt of the third, and slashing the last with all my force across his face, fled into the street.

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It was deserted, and running low, like a wolf, I gained the grateful shadow of a mighty clump of cactus plants.

As I threw myself to the ground, I heard a loud crash, saw a volume of flame and sparks shoot up into the bright afternoon sky, and knew that the house had fallen in upon whomsoever was within its walls. I was not pursued, so the four I had so roughly treated must have been buried under the ruins, leaving me safe and free, but spent and weary, and in awful agony from the top of my hairless scalp to the soles of my blistered feet.

Thus, writhing and groaning, yet unmolested, I lay, till night with its cooling breezes soothed my sore and aching limbs; then, dragging myself as well as my weariness would let from shelter to shelter and street to street, stopping at every crossing and for every passer-by for fear of discovery, I cleared that thrice-accursed town and reached the open country, a rivulet, and a welcome draught of Nature's sparkling nectar, fresh from the mountain slopes.

Once on the way, whilst I rested in the deep shadow of a silent house, a man passed me like a flash of light, running

Hurled myself fiercely upon it.

for his life, the pursuers, a troop of mounted grey-coats, riding hard behind, their mouths full of bitter jests. Swiftly as he passed, however, I saw his face, and knew him for Phrena, one of my own crew, who was next to me in all our trials of strength and skill. When the mounted troop re-passed on their return journey to quarters, he was strapped by the neck to a soldier's saddle-girth. With a grim smile at my own danger on I crept again.

At dawn I reached the door of the sacred grotto, thinking that there I might find help and safety, but the door was closed fast, and the black, conical hill looked so forbidding in the early light that with an imprecation on it and the priests who dwelt within, I slowly and painfully turned away, seeking the quiet of the great sugar-cane plantations for my resting place till night fell once more. Thus, sleeping and resting by day and travelling by night, eating what scanty food I found by the wayside, I came at last to the outskirts of a great city that I now know was Kronos, the capital of the kingdom, and there, in a fair garden, all blooming with rare and beautiful flowers, and scented with a myriad sweet perfumes, all melodious with the *tinkle, tinkle* of a dozen rills, and the pattering of the spray-drops from a lovely fountain, I lay down and slept upon a mossy bank, with the fern-fronds hiding me from prying eyes.

All day I slept unseen, and when night came was so loth to leave this fairy spot, that I lingered till the shafts of morning light shot slanting through the aloes and tipped the slender palms with coronals of gold, and the birds and insects woke from their nocturnal rest, filling the air with the twittering and the humming of their busy life, and so I, perforce, stayed there for another day. This mattered little to me then, for after that baptism of blood and fire through which I had passed, a dull leaden apathy had seized upon me, and I was conscious only of a gnawing sense of loneliness and loss, wherefore or of what I seemed to have forgotten.

All I knew was that I wandered an outlaw, with a soul sore with sorrow, a heart filled with bitterness, and a body racked with cuts and burns, thinking little of the past, caring little for the present, and still less for the future, saving only to hide me from the gaze of men, and to sleep as often as I might in safety.

And as I slept in that fair garden under the cool shadow of the ferns and the aloes, I dreamed that I was back once more on our lovely isle in the sunny sea, and that in our well-known trysting place Viol and I sat hand in hand, content with each other's love, whilst little Didron—grown since I had seen him last—gambolled carelessly among the mimic breakers that rolled on the narrow strip of shore. Then I thought that a great pain seized me, and I rolled on the sand in mortal agony, whilst Viol bent tenderly over me soothing my distress.

I looked again at my darling, as, sweetly solicitous, she tended my misery, and when I looked I saw that her hair was no longer the rich gold crown that I so loved, but a head-cover of deep and glossy black, falling on her shoulders in ample, darkling folds. I looked again, and the face changed; it was no longer Viol's face, but another, prouder and more passionate—the face of a veritable goddess of love.

I started, awoke, and rose, and there, in very truth, was a superb beauty bending over me, regarding me with manifest surprise and unhidden interest, which expression turned to one of suddenly assumed anger and mortification at being thus discovered by me whom she had thought fast asleep. For my part I neither moved nor spoke for some moments, being absorbed in unrestrained admiration at this glorious vision of womanhood, straightway forgetting my dream as though it had never been.

And small need is there for wonder that I should be so lost in contemplation of this goddess, who stood returning my gaze with furtive glance, half-defiant, half-coy, the raven darkness of whose luxurious hair rivalled the blackness of my own (before this last was frizzled up by the fire), whose eyes shone brighter in their deep, dark lustre than any of the brilliant stars that twinkle in the splendour of the tropic night, whose olive cheeks, with just the faintest tinge upon them, were shaped and shaded more tastefully in their unaided beauty than the most elaborate charms of art can simulate; whose figure, in its tall and lissom contour, suggested grace and ease, yet lacked not sign of strength and suppleness in every outline curve and every intertwining symmetry of form, whose dainty, sandalled feet, all heedlessly wetted by the early dewdrops from the grass on which she had ventured to gain a glimpse of me, peeped out shyly, like twin sisters, from beneath her snow-white robe, embroidered with richest purple, and whose very presence diffused a charm, a something indefinable, yet real, which stole on all my senses, reaching to my inmost heart through all the avenues of life, irresistible, unresisted, holding me in spiritual bondage to her from whom it emanated from that moment till now, even to my life's end, when Briseis herself is no more with me.

Now as I stood, gazing in rapt admiration at this lovely

figure of Briseis as she looked when but a year over a score, I suddenly remembered what a sorry sight I must present to her, all blackened and blistered from head to foot, all scarred with grievous cuts and slashes, clothed only in the scantiest remnant of a scorched and shrivelled garment, with hair burnt off or curled and whitened out of all semblance to its former darkness, and thought it best to speak, lest this vision of beauty should take fright and be gone.

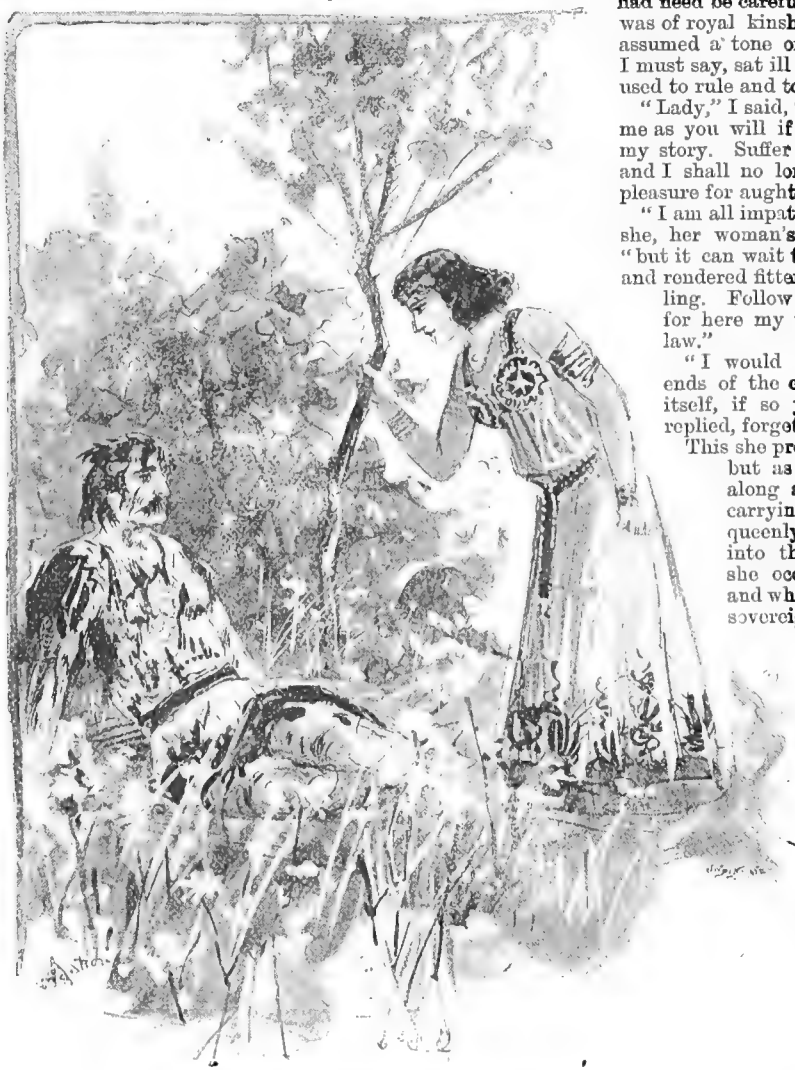
"Lady," I said, "do not leave me—yet; for I am in sore need of help and in fear of my life."

She became at once all interest and gentleness and sympathy.

"I know not who you are," she said, in a voice so soft and tender that it seemed as though a ministering servant of the Spirit of Love spoke, "but your voice rings true, and you seem to be in sore distress. Seemst as though you have passed through fighting and through fire, both cruel and severe. Pray tell your name, stranger?"

I thought awhile, pondering whether to give my rightful name or no, but feeling certain that Vichri, the conqueror of Miropis, would believe me dead, and feeling, moreover, a strange confidence in my new-found friend, I answered:

"My name is Arnon, lady; the foster-son of one Didron. And how are you named, who are so gentle to a scarecrow like I?"



I neither moved nor spoke for some moments.

"My people call me Briseis," she replied, "but pray, are you not a pirate, one of those whom Vichri my cousin surprised and killed at Miropis but four days agone? The name sounds familiar in my ears, as though I had heard it before."

"I was the leader of that pirate band, the captain of that pirate ship, who am now left without a ship or crew," I answered boldly, "but oh, Briseis, if your charity be equal to your loveliness and grace, you will not breathe my secret to any—least of all to your cousin Vichri, whom I saw in the fight."

A radiant blush overspread her cheeks and mantled her lofty brow with deepest crimson, as she said, stepping nearer to me and taking one of my grimed and aching hands between her own, warm and soft:

"I will keep your secret, Arnon, for I feel that I am guarding the life of a true and brave man, but"—and here her regal head was tossed haughtily upwards—"indulge thee not in such flattery of me, who am but a general's cousin, with a strain of royal blood in my veins!"

Now I saw that I was treading on uncertain ground and had need be careful if my benefactress was of royal kinship, and so at once assumed a tone of submission, which I must say, sat ill upon me, who was used to rule and to command.

"Lady," I said, "you may do with me as you will if you but first hear my story. Suffer me to tell you that and I shall no longer fear your displeasure for aught I may be."

"I am all impatient to hear it," said she, her woman's curiosity aroused, "but it can wait till you are cleansed and rendered fitter for a lady's dwelling. Follow me and fear not, for here my word and wish are law."

"I would follow you to the ends of the earth and till death itself, if so you wished me," I replied, forgetting her caution.

This she pretended not to hear, but as I limped painfully along after her, my lady, carrying herself with a queenly grace, led the way into the stately mansion she occupied and owned, and where she reigned sole sovereign of her little world of slaves.

Some of these latter, being summoned, ran hither and thither with alacrity to do their mistress's bidding, and very soon I lay in a downy bed, well washed from top to toe, and anointed lavishly with all manner of soothing and healing ointments, scented with fragrant aromas of Ind. I grew well and strong again with marvellous haste, since, added to these new and strange attentions, my Lady Briseis came ministering daily to my wants and whims—for I was at times exacting and troublesome—but I was fain to eke out my spell of weakness as far as it would go, that I might live all the longer in my lady's smile.

At last, when I could no longer find excuse or feign sickness or weariness, I must needs be up and about, attired in the garments of a great lord, which Briseis had bought for me without so much as a word.

Then, sitting on the pillared terrace of her house, I told my lady the story of my life as I have told it to you, hiding nothing nor sparing myself for all the cruel deeds we pirates did upon the sea. Whilst I talked, sitting on that

terrace so full of the great climbing plants and so rich with the sense-lulling sounds and perfumes borne in upon us and swept around us by the evening zephyrs so refreshing after the heat of the day, she sat near me, holding one of my hands in hers and watching my face with wondrous interest, that turned to admiration, and deepened into awe, and when I reached the end of my story, seemed changed to worship, almost love, I thought. For awhile after she was silent, looking dreamily over that fair garden; then, as the spirit of meditation was beginning to cast its subtle spell over my soul, the sweet cadence of her gentle voice broke in upon me.

"'Tis a true story, Arnon, that you have told, and right glad am I to have sheltered you and made you my friend. I, too, can tell you something that has happened since the day, now three weeks ago, when my cousin Vichri burst upon you and captured your ship. It is ill news, I fear."

"Pray tell me, even though it break my heart," I cried, my thoughts flying back to Viol and her babe.

"'Twill do that, I am afraid," said she, but smiling as she spoke, "unless there be an antidote at hand wherewith to blunt the edge of its pain. My cousin's soldiers captured one of your men alive, and when he refused to tell anything of your hiding-places they put him to the torture. When near bereft of his reason by the racking pains they administer to such stubborn dogs, he told them where your little island lies and how to steer to reach it. Something more was on his tongue, 'tis said, but before they could gather its import the poor wretch died, exhausted by the torment. So a fleet has been sent out to lay waste the island and kill all its inhabitants, old and young, men, women, and children, that none of the breed may be left alive."

I bowed my head in silence, as for the blow to pass over me, but honestly, it hurt me less than it had done a three-week before, for I had grown to expect it.

"The will of the Gods be done," was all I said.

"The Gods have been very merciful to you, Arnon," answered Briseis, "since they have saved you alive, when all else have perished, and have guided your footsteps to one who will befriend you as long as she lives. And I think, son of Didron, that the priest Unim spoke truly concerning you, for even now the first part of his saying has come about."

This I began to think myself, and therewith my old self-assurance came back with double force, and I resolved to make the most of my lot, wherever it might be cast.

So I sat at the right hand of Briseis at her feasts, clothed in the finest, and eating of the best that the land could lavish on its nobles, having a social standing, as the privileged friend of the lady Briseis, second to none in that magnificent city, well named Kronos the Stately.

Also I gained renown and the admiring gaze of damsels' eyes for my skill and strength in the trials of arms that were held continually in the town, until none dared to stand up before me at sword-play or spear-practice or in the use of the sling or bow, or even at trials of speed or horsemanship or wrestling, and above all, none came against me who had an iron grip like mine.

For this latter notoriety I was named Phrena the Iron-Fingered by the soldiers and men-at-arms who thronged the vicinity of the Court of King Dulo the Tenth—for I deemed it not wise to tempt the fates by still retaining my real cognomen. To Briseis only I was Arnon, the son of Didron. Also I came to the notice of royalty and was crowned with decorations of merit by the shaky hands of the wine-and-women-loving king, who, I verily believe, beneath his smug and smooth exterior and quavering, mirthless laugh, was monstrously jealous of my unimpaired physique.

All this was well, and so well that I had been content to live there in the sunshine of Briseis' smile and the favourite of a war-loving populace, till courtier life had sapped my manhood, and I had gone down with grey hairs to a tame and peaceful grave, had it not been that I was in constant fear of recognition as my true self should I come face to face with one-eared Vichri, who, though away on distant service, was expected to return at any time; and that I was on precarious footing in the house of my protectress, whom I had grown to love with an ardour I never felt for little Viol, but who seemed to treat me merely as a plaything to be proud of, a privileged retainer, or at most a faithful friend, though I flattered myself that her heart told another tale.

So I resolved that I must become rich, and purchase lands, and count amongst the wealthy nobles of the city, before I put my love to the trial, and what better way of getting rich than to take ship and secure for myself the treasure of that cave wherein I had found refuge some fifteen years ago, and of which I alone knew the secret? But first I must have a ship, and from whence could I get that? In my perplexity I saw no way but to consult my fair friend.

(To be continued.)

POST-CARD COMPETITION.

No. 15.

THE titles of two of the stories in this number have been interchanged. A guinea will be sent to the first person living within 100 miles of London who sends the title of each story and the page on which it *should* appear. Another guinea will go to the reader living more than 100 miles from London under the same conditions. *Post-cards only, please.*

"What's the matter with your brother lately?"

"Oh, he's been like that ever since he won a prize in *Pearson's Weekly* Straight Line Competition."

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JUMBLED STORY NO. 15.

MAKE DISABLE OUT.

SEE PAGE 460.

THE MURDER ON THE GREAT BRITISH RAILWAY.

I gave a slight shudder as I finished reading that a jeweller was killed and robbed yesterday in the proximity of Shrewsbury clock was nothing to the ladies. Mr. Fossdyke, I found, had left the railway carriage with the murderer of Mr Symons. He was not in the slightest degree dismayed by his heavy blows. After that he made no effort to travel together. He's a gentlemanly man; you'd crowded round and clamoured for an explanation.

What was to be done?

Archy was a lord and it was the ambition of Archy's future father in law, Mr. Samuel Fossdyke, that the position I was in placed me entirely at his rug, and the "click" was caused by his turn-in, I felt an uncontrollable desire to slumber.

We had a long run before us so taking a pull at Samuel Fossdyke, the celebrated pork dealer of Bond Street, deposited the jewels with the jeweller, partially opened one eye.

Gracious heaven! The description of the Miss Jeromette Fossdyke to marry a lord. Archy was not to be cooled even by what I had gone and involuntarily clutched my bag.

"Now, Tom," said Archy. "I want you to take me over the top of his paper, still taking into the flask, I filled my pipe and opened the paper.

I cheerfully promised.

"You'll have to be careful, old fellow," he must introduce you to Fossdyke before you start. Later in the day he drew me aside and said:

"Say, officers, I guess you've got the wrong victim, the assassin opened the carriage door, and following poor Fossdyke who was being dragged to give time for refreshment. I was in the act of well-bred appearance, slightly above the middle platform. I hadn't the remotest idea where my man was found in the footway, death having choose a moment when he would be able to take Chicago, and his family.

So I agreed to go.

Oh! if I could only get a good look at his face. A thick moustache nearly hides his mouth, which pushed the body out, and then waiting quietly till I sat up and found myself within three feet of him.

"Wal, Mr. Rothsay, I didn't expect to meet you under the same delusion. We had each taken the the wealthy pig dealer of Chicago, for the murderer of the robbery.

"It's a fact Tom. You have heard me speak of justice to be had in this played-out country, I'll have the daily paper.

"Thank heaven," I murmured.

So I leaned across the carriage, and said:

"'It's very nice! but don't you think the setting has a most determined expression. Eyes dark, active, and considerably above the average in Edinburgh.

I was musing over the absurdity of this destinctness. Click! There it was again.

When the train drew up at the terminus in Thompson's, Bond Street, and have them reset. On the death of his father, finding the estates dressed. What *was* I to do? If I allowed the man. That man," he added, pointing to me, "is handed over to the police.

He had recovered from the blow I had dealt Mr. Symons, a traveller in the jewellery trade. and hiring a yacht went for a cruise in Eastern London the prisoner was securely handcuffed and touched my foot. In an instant I was awake. I conceived a great liking for the girl and in due horror I found that, despite the mortal peril I was the murderer of Mr. Symons."

"The body has been identified as that of a man and from the carriage window in graphic course they became engaged.

The train stopped a few minutes at Peterborough but the "click" had sounded with ominous discription which might serve for thousands of fools in Europe, but for downright cussedness, it's rather irritating to have to listen night quietly disappeared."

Yes, Archy was right; here were the particulars I showed it to her. She handled it in a most softly opening it took something out, and then closed, and his shirt literally torn from his back.

But Fossdyke, I noticed, kept his one eye—the unusually large, and very sinister. He dresses with such intentness during the service that I can without losing consciousness, for I found it for this night's work, I will as sure as my name is supposed that, after rifling the pockets of his man."

"Could you oblige me with a light?" My companion dropped his paper.

He had succeeded to the title two years before.

Surely I could reach him before the revolver and fired. The next instant I flung myself on him, again. The shaving alters you, but I should know one occupant beside myself and he was reading.

The English weakness for making speeches began to melt as I realised the truth. I had taken him with the revolver but he presented a sorry affair next morning. "Desperate struggle in a night's work."

I am no coward, but I as nearly fainted as a man for that I recked nothing.

"Promise never to reveal your share in that position.

Lunch was then announced and I was introduced to Fossdyke in a railway carriage. A. G.

"What have you done with your moustache darn me, if you don't beat creation. If there's any talker the world has ever seen, I cleared my throat dreadfully encumbered, he shut up Castle Ferrers, and I was to be Archy's best man.

Fossdyke has made a good story out of our Three feet!

The passengers getting scent of the affair between Peterborough and London. I'll pack them to understand that the English were the biggest sex I say nothing.

I kept away from Castle Ferrers till the wedding I to wait for the end without making one single overlook what has taken place on one condition."

It was a first-class carriage and there was only me, I waited for his next move. Presently to my disparaging manner, and said:

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"Wal," he continued, "I've always been given his mercy. After regarding me for a moment with male countenance to deceive me; as to the other rather formidable weapon—and I was vigorous, through. Imitating the example of the greatest shouldered middle-aged gentlemanly-looking man but I had a large clasp knife in my pocket—a head, the thick moustache, hiding the cruel mouth, shaved. Archy stared at me in astonishment.

I was surprised, for Archy was such a good-physiognomist. I do not think it possible for any consideration the enormous value of the stones I went on, "for I see by this morning's paper the train reached Riley—where tickets are taken—the 'Light of Asia,' and what a magnificent strength.

I looked cautiously round. The crowd was at his moustache and frowned heavily.

The marriage was to take place in a fortnight and whiskers," he whispered, "I shouldn't have you among a thousand. Wal, sir, I am willing to renew the combat but lay on the seat regarding no one will suspect the nature of its contents. I attempts to level the pistol at me, but I held his footboard. Directly these were observed, an engine at a terrific speed and the vibration was very great. which reposed in the netting over my head and no one I dare trust them with but you."

Why should I not lie back? In that position I could be withdrawn from beneath the rug, aimed, language described to the awe stricken crowd not have slumbered many minutes when something felt sure I was recognised. I was not mistaken. cartridges. A numbness began to steal through the eyes large and sinister. The man, too, was well and a deadly struggle ensued. Backwards and forsounded, so I set the cup down and rushed on the murderer! There was the low retreating forewards we swayed our breath coming in short, quick struggle. The curtains were torn, one of the windows after the well known manner of the aged statespockets rifled and my dead body flung out. Was I aways had a great belief in my skill as a spectacle. His mouth was cut, one of his eyes placed the bag at my side, lit a cigar, and opened me with a ferocity impossible to describe. But I was unarmed as far as firearms were concerned, surrendering to the influence I fell asleep. I could and telegraphed to Archy as if nothing had happened caused by a revolver. No money or valuables in this black bag. It's a shabby old thing, and that was all I cared for. When the train stopped what had taken place.

"Name it," I cried.

I leaned against a pillar for support.

"About ten miles from London the body of a carriage that had been the scene of a most deadly vengeance leaped into life. Wresting the revolver crept back to his seat. I breathed freely again.

Quietly opening the large knife I had with further examination revealed blood stains on the gasps. The murderer made the most desperate effort to save myself? No, a thousand times no. He's going to London on business and you can clear that the object of the attack was robbery. It became aware that my fellow passenger was regarding me attentively over the top of his paper.

The scoundrel was standing over me.

It was not likely that I was going to feel to the station. So I sneaked—sneaked is the fellow to fancy that I suspected him, he would mingled in the throng on the platform, and promised to wire the moment I had placed the other was behind a green shade—fixed on me height, forehead rather low and slightly retreating. his attack.

The lights faded and the faces around me directed to an empty compartment of a first-class eyelids lowered watch him from beneath the lashes. known you."

Escape of the murderer. Arrest of an innocent word—out of the station and drove straight to a look of deadly intentness, he took down a bag of Mr. Symons. In fact, we had both laboured last evening the attention of the officials was at Riley I summoned the guard and transferred from his now weakened grasp I struck him several double mistake. It's a good story, I admit, but these confounded jewels to London at once, to waters. In Japan he made the acquaintance of The man the police are looking for is a broadments, then he might not be so careful in making her speak so." And my old friend tugged irritably on the seat. Then the smouldering embers of morning and then appeared at the altar clean and as the train steamed out of the station, is dreadfully old fashioned?' It riled me to hear the murderer to his charge.

But supposing I could contrive to lull his susment I came to, managing to secure an evening resigned myself to a journey alone and having pened. This is how the papers chronicled the other for the assassin.

ANOTHER GREAT ROBBERY ON THE GREAT BRITISH RAILWAY.

Presently I stretched my antagonist full length after night to his shameless mendacity. Falstaff could simulate slumber and by keeping my picions and yet keep a sharp watch on his moveing the chamber piece round as he inserted the paper as the train glided out of the station.

Click! What was that? The train was going alarmed because a fellow passenger chose to peep at me at a disadvantage.

This statement was received with a laugh.

I had captured the murderer of Mr. Symons, and missing, is estimated to be worth nearly £10,000. tempered fellow as a rule.

For some time I resisted the inclination but the jewels in Thompson's hands, I said good-bye. The jewellery he had with him, and which is smashed, and the floor stained with blood. A never think that he'd been a pig sticker."

As I shouldn't know him if I saw him, I was signalled for to search the line.

Why, the man had a revolver concealed beneath my limbs. In a few seconds I should be shot, my stone it is. Well, what do you think she did when drowsiness grew on me more and more till at length people, including even myself, when I suddenly plainly, and generally carries a small black bag."

"On the arrival in London of the great 9.15 train of vigorously blowing a cup of coffee when the bell carriage was, so I bundled into the first compartof any kind were found on the body, so it seems Castle an hour before but would join the train at had with me it behoved me to proceed with caution. wrist in an iron clutch.

They are heirlooms and worth £20,000, and there's is Samuel Fossdyke."

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"How long have I been on a case?" repeated Inspector Belville musingly, "well, I should say that Blackingly business took as long as any to unearth, and that was the best part of three years. Not that I haven't been longer, off and on, at other bits of business; for the matter of that, I am still looking out for a man who killed his sweetheart fifteen years ago; but for steady, downright, day after day investigation, the Blackingly affair is certainly my record.

"I dare say you think that as soon as the newspapers have dropped commenting on any particular crime, whose perpetration has not been immediately traced, we police shelve the investigation and turn our attention to something fresh. Quite a mistake; our chance comes when the papers give us a little peace.

"Thanks to their gratuitous suggestions, supposed clues, and up-to-date information, our wide-awake William Sykeses are too often enabled to evade our vigilance. If it is a serious matter, a special man is put on the job, and he has to stick to it, night and day, till he succeeds, or the heads arrive at the conclusion that nothing will ever come of it. I thought at one time, in connection with the case I am going to tell you about, that it would have to be included in the "Undiscovered Ledger" at the Yard. However, by a stroke of luck, nothing else mind you, I managed to clear things up.

"I dare say you will remember reading about the conviction of the Blackingly gang some few years back, but I don't suppose you ever heard exactly what brought about their downfall. They were a dangerous and mysterious lot, and the extraordinary part of it was, they confined their operations to one county, Surrey. We never heard of them in town; they stuck to lonely country houses, and you can take it from me there are a good many such, in what most people reckon our fairest county.

"One night it would be a gentleman's seat near Redhill, next week the owner of a place at Epsom would be found half killed and his silver cleaned out, and never a trace left behind. They were wonderfully clever at their little games, and not without a sense of humour, too, it would seem.

"They locked up an eminent J. P., a staunch teetotaller, who had been roused by the marauders and had come upon the scene in his night-shirt, in the bath-room, and blocking the overflow pipe, turned the tap on (cold water only). That gentleman gave us no peace at the Yard until the offenders were caught, and he was really the cause of my being put on their track.

"From a close study of their mode of operations, it seemed to me that they must have their centre in the country. They could never hope to get back to town after every foray by train, or on foot, and driving the orthodox dog-cart was too risky. To find out this centre was my first endeavour. I had a choice of some twenty villages, and it took me twelve months to make up my mind that Blackingly must be the rendezvous. This was a little village on the Brighton line some twenty miles from London. The villagers were mostly agricultural labourers, or lime-burners; a more unlikely lot among which to find a gang of burglars one could hardly wish to see, and yet I was convinced that under their apparent simplicity and guileless ways I should find my men.

"I arrived on the scene as a jobbing gardener, but ready and willing to turn my hand to anything from ditching to lime-burning; in the latter capacity I soon discovered I was not wanted. The ranks were always full. Nine men and a foreman constituted the staff of the day and night shifts, and to all appearance the men were typical of their class, with nothing extraordinary in their appearance or behaviour. They lived in a row of wooden huts in the village, just off the main road, and not very far from the kilns. Some were married, and had families, the unmarried males seemed to share a couple of huts between them, and depended on their mates' wives to 'do' for them.

"I was always fond of a bit of gardening, so the odd jobs I picked up at the various gentlemen's houses round suited my taste and left me free to prowl about unsuspected. At the same time I could never make much headway with the lime-burners. I would drop in of an evening at the 'Bay Leaf' and make myself as sociable as possible with the labourers, but I never seemed able to win the confidence of the men of lime. Whether they distrusted all outsiders, or suspected me in particular, it was hard to say, but never by any chance did they let fall in my hearing any hint that would identify them with the daring gang which still continued their depredations.

"On various pretexts would I drop in to one or other of the huts while the men were at work, leaving, perhaps,

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a few vegetables for the lady of the house or some flowers for the children, but nothing in the shape of stolen property met my gaze, and you may be sure I had a very complete, not to mention lengthy, list of missing articles. Often, too, have I shadowed the huts at all times between midnight and dawn, on the chance of tracking an inmate either outward or homeward bound, but never a man to be seen. They seemed to keep most exemplary hours. Again, at a safe distance I would spy upon the night shift at their steamy work in the 'wee sma' 'oors.' Not a member missing.

"I was sorely puzzled because, from the very fact of their reticence and their hanging so together, I felt convinced that they were somehow concerned in the mysterious burglings, but without a scrap of evidence to go upon it would have been folly to have made a search.

"As a matter of precaution I had provided myself with a search-warrant, and was in constant communication with the nearest station, which had instructions to supply as many men as I required.

"Nearly two years had passed and I had acquired quite a reputation in the neighbourhood as a jobber. All the same it was monotonous work, and not by any means so easy as the good folks of Blackingly imagined.

"My lodging was within sight of the end wooden hut, and many an hour have I, in a darkened room, sat and watched for the developments that never came. Hardly ever, save on Saturday, did a light show in any of the wooden tenements after ten o'clock at night. This I tested by many out-door vigils, varied by an occasional peep at the lime-kilns, some hundred and fifty yards away.

"It was getting near Christmas, and my duties as gardener were perceptibly lighter; but increased leisure to track the enemy seemed to bring me no nearer, yet I hung on dog-like, my tenacity rather increased than lessened by the not too polite requests from the Yard for information.

"I was sitting one evening at the 'Bay Leaf,' partly concealed by the open tap-room door, conning quietly a list of articles stolen the previous night from a private residence not five miles away. I could almost have sworn none of my lambs were in it, because I had watched the greater part of the early morning, both near the huts and at the kilns, without a suspicion of an absentee from either home or work, and yet all the indications of their handiwork were there. All manner of things they had pilfered, from a Victoria Cross, much prized by the owner of the house, down to a large plum-pudding, destined to adorn the Christmas board. I was just smiling to myself over this last item, when one of the wives of the party tripped in, and, seeing one of the gay bachelors of her set apparently lounging alone at the bar, cried out heartily:

"'Well, Joe, wen are yer a-goin' to look in for your share o' the puddin'?'

"A sharp but stealthy 'hush' from Joe was all the reply she got as he, by an almost imperceptible nod, indicated my presence. I, of course, remained absorbed in my literature, but, though not an excitable man generally, I distinctly heard my heart beating away a hundred to the minute. The couple conversed for a moment in an undertone and left together. I could see from the woman's gestures that she did not consider I ought to be taken into account (I had made myself rather a favourite with the ladies), but the man seemed suspicious. Was it a mere coincidence, or could there be any possible connection between the Bourne House plum-pudding and the toothsome fare referred to by the 'lady-limer.' It was worth risking; I sent a wire to the police station at C——, using a special indicator to avert suspicion in case the telegraph people might talk, to send on the 'half-dozen bulbs' by next train. The 'bulbs,' in the shape of six stalwart plain-clothes men, arrived in due time. At ten o'clock I had the hut where the talkative female resided surrounded and timidly knocked at the door. The woman's voice asked:

"'Who's there?'

"'Only George, the gardener, mistress,' I answered as she proceeded to unbolt the door.

"'And what may George the gardener want this time o' night?' queried the good lady suspiciously.

"I temporised by getting my foot well inside the door, and then boldly said: 'I've come for my share of the pudding.'

"The look of surprise and horror in the woman's face was almost laughable, but leaving me master of the doorway, she made a dash for the back room, and following close upon her heels I found her in the act of raising a large black substance to throw it out of the window. I let her alone, and the article in question (the Bourne House pudding) was neatly 'held' by one of the 'bulbs' stationed just outside—shock number two for Mrs. Jargins. I asked her where her husband was.

"'Ain't come 'ome yet from the pub,' was the prompt reply.

"'Won't do,' says I, 'saw him come in an hour ago and I'll swear he hasn't left the house since.'

"'Find him, then,' she returned, with just a ring of triumph in her voice. Alas! the exultation was short-lived—shock number three was upon her. I had just turned to leave the kitchen when, to my astonishment, I saw the hearth-stone cautiously raised and a man's head and shoulders appeared in the opening. He commenced:

"'I say, Polly, I've come back for the sack, I——.' He got no further; he caught sight of me just as I made a dash for his throat. I got hold before the stone dropped, and with assistance soon had my gentleman outside of his burrow. Then it all flashed upon me. I hastily dispatched four of the men to the brink of the lime-kilns to be within call, and again raised the hearth-stone, and secured the dark lantern with which my underground friend was provided.

"'Now,' I said, producing a revolver and motioning one of my men to follow me, the other being left in charge of Polly and the house, 'down you go again and take me to the other end of that tunnel; at the first sound or struggle this pistol will go off, accidentally, of course, but your head will be just in front of the muzzle, so you know what to expect.'

"The lime-kilner seemed to grasp the situation, and led the way down a few steps cut out of the chalk to the entrance to a passage about four feet high, leading, as I suspected, in the direction of the lime-kilns. The tunnel was beautifully dry and had been hewn with comparative ease out of the solid chalk.

"At length we heard the murmur of voices. With just a touch of the revolver against the back of our leader's head by way of a reminder we pressed on. Suddenly we came upon a small chamber with an exit on the other side. Lying about round a blazing fire were three men in working garb; shown up by the blaze, and piled around on shelves, cut out of the chalk, were the spoils of many a raid. We had come upon their store-house. At our approach one of the men, not noticing the increased numbers, growled out:

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"'Nice time you've been after that there sack, I'm blowed if——'

"Then he stopped in amazement. Still holding Joe by the collar and allowing my assistant to take up a position by my side with his six-shooter prominently displayed, I said, recognising the young man of the 'Bay Leaf':

"'I called for a slice of that pudding and Joe kindly brought me on here to have a look at the other things.

"'That's no use,' I continued sharply, as the others made a move for their hip-pockets, 'we've got you covered and there's half-a-dozen more outside, so just take it calmly.'

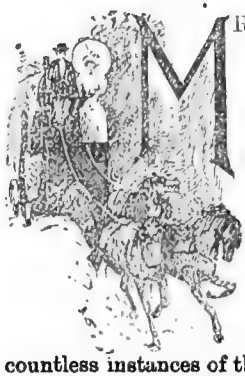
"Releasing Joe for a moment I blew my whistle and heard a faint reply in the distance. An exchange of signals resulted in the appearance of my other men with the horny-handed ones fresh from their toil in tow. They had seized the men at work and discovered the not too well concealed entrance to the cave. So we were quite a merry party.

"Well, we got them away safely and you know the result—fifteen years. You see they did the thing well. The men who were off duty at night snatched a few hours' sleep, then sneaked out by their tunnel when I supposed them safe in bed, walked across country by different routes to the appointed house to be plundered, did their work and returned the same way to their cave and homes. The night men, of course, remained at their posts and kept an eye on things in general; all the huts were connected with the tunnel.

"Polly's outspokenness, combined with Joe's fatal lapse of memory, had been their undoing, and I never see a plum-pudding now without thinking of the Blackingly gang."

R. J. Turner.

A Lock of Flaxen Hair.



MR. EBENEZER FRESHFIELD looked the personification of self-satisfaction, as he lolled back in an easy-chair after his sumptuous dinner. In his hand was the morning's *Telegraph* in which with a self-approving smile he surveyed, under the head of "The Kamschatkans' Relief Fund," "Ebenezer Freshfield, Esq., £1,000." Then, turning to the editorial comments on the progress of the fund, he read: "Another addition has to be made to the countless instances of the generosity and public spirit of Mr. Ebenezer Freshfield, who has made the munificent contribution of £1,000 to our steadily-growing fund."

Yes, there is no doubt that Mr. Ebenezer Freshfield, public philanthropist, churchwarden, and proprietor of the famous drapery emporium bearing his name, was exceedingly pleased with himself. To invariably have the adjective "respected" attached to his name in public references was grateful to the soul of Mr. Freshfield. It had been whispered, however, that it was a case with that gentleman of no publicity, no philanthropy, and suggested that no advertisement was so efficacious as the philanthropic one. But when did success ever escape the tribute which envy pays to it? Certainly, Mr. Freshfield's private beneficences were unknown, but, as the preservation of the left hand in a state of ignorance as to the procedure of the right is expressly enjoined, that, surely, should be reckoned to his credit!

Mr. Freshfield's contemplation of the evidences of his munificence was interrupted by the announcement that his brother, Mr. Samuel Freshfield, wished to see him.

Mr. Ebenezer condescendingly extended the tips of two fingers to his brother, as the latter entered the room.

"How d'ye do, Samuel?" he inquired, in a patronising tone of voice.

"I am fairly well, thank you, Ebenezer," answered the other, meekly. "And you?—you look well."

"I am well—exceedingly well!" said the elder brother smugly.

The brothers were a strange contrast as they sat there. Ebenezer thrown back arrogantly in his chair, with an air of pompous prosperity, and the other fidgeting nervously on the edge of his seat, as though he recognised his own presumption in being there at all.

"Well," continued Ebenezer, after a pause, placing his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets and spreading his hands out over a comfortable rotundity, "still painting masterpieces, Samuel, eh?"

There was a suggestion of contempt in the manner in which the question was asked which asserted itself through its veneer of affected jocularity.

"I am working at a picture which I hope may be considered to show some improvement," answered Samuel modestly.

"Does your work bring you any more money?" asked Ebenezer drily.

"There is a delight in one's work which is not necessarily to be measured by money," replied Samuel, with a faint assertion of dignity.

"Ah!" said Ebenezer superciliously, "you fellows of the 'artistic temperament,' or whatever you call it in your own jargon, all affect to despise money, but it's a useful standard—a useful standard to enable one to judge where one stands."

Samuel did not reply, and there was silence for a moment. Then Ebenezer spoke again.

"It has always seemed a great pity to me, Samuel, that you had never put your money into some respectable

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business. Look at the difference between us. We both come into a thousand pounds. You go off wandering about Europe, picking up an art education I think you called it, and I dare say have a very small fragment of your capital left, while I, like a sensible man, if you will pardon my saying so, go into business and prosper. Freshfield's Drapery Emporium is a household name, and I am—well, not, perhaps, a millionaire, but warm, Samuel, decidedly warm! And then look at the good that money enables you to do to your less fortunate fellow men—that's a blessed thought, indeed, Samuel!"

Samuel plucked up heart at that. "That sentiment does you credit, Ebenezer," he said admiringly, "and at the same time makes it easy for me to tell you what I came here to see you about. The fact is, Ebenezer, I am engaged upon a painting of great scope and ambition, which I am certain (I say it in all modesty) will bring me both fame and money in abundance. My devoting myself exclusively to this work has led to the neglect of other and more saleable works which would have provided for my living requirements. I have come to you, therefore, Samuel, to ask whether you would temporarily assist me with a small loan. My picture will soon be finished—there is no question as to its sale, and I shall then be in a position to repay you."

Ebenezer did not answer for a few minutes. It may have been that he was not so sanguine as his brother regarding the disposal of his picture, and thought the prospect of seeing his money back not particularly hopeful. Then he rose from his chair, drew himself up to his full height, and said pompously:

"Samuel, I am grieved that you should have asked me that, deeply grieved; for it compels me, quite in your interest, let me assure you, to decline your request. It has ever been a principle of mine," he continued, in the manner of one addressing a public meeting, "to decline to use my money as a pauperising agent to lower the self-respect of any man. If you were disabled, Samuel, my purse would gladly be placed at your disposal; but you are not. You are well able to pursue your calling, and when, by your own unaided efforts you have extricated yourself from this temporary embarrassment you will bless me for my attitude, and cherish with pardonable pride the thought that you are beholden to no man for the proud position in which you then stand!"

Ebenezer beamed round the room as though in imagination he heard the rapturous plaudits of a multitude approving his sentiments.

Samuel arose, and with a gesture of pathetic dignity said:

"I am sorry I asked you, Ebenezer—good-night!"

"Do, pray, believe, Samuel," said Ebenezer, "that it is only in your interest, and for your good. You will thank me some day, I am certain!" and he waved his brother from the room.

There was no resentment in Samuel's heart against his brother as he walked slowly home to his lodgings. After all, he argued ingenuously, he had spent his inheritance. Was it fair that he should seek a portion of his brother's? Perhaps his dreams about this great picture might be only dreams. But he was sorry, and not altogether for himself. He had counted upon being able to relieve the more pressing necessity of a stricken brother artist—that saddened him far more than his own need of a good meal.

Then a thought struck him which caused him to quicken his pace till he came to a dingy-looking shop in a side street, which he entered. When he emerged therefrom he was minus an overcoat but plus a small square of cardboard and half a sovereign.

He hurried on and came to his friend's house. He shot past the landlady who opened the door and ran up the stairs to the small back room in which his friend was lying.

"It's all right, my boy!" he said cheerily. "I've seen my brother and here's half a sovereign for the present. We'll see about some more when that's gone. He says you can repay him when you get to work again. Now, don't disturb yourself—that's all right! I'll send Mrs. Brown up to get what you want. Good-night, good-night! my boy. I'll come in again the first thing in the morning," and before the patient could get in a word of thanks, Samuel had dashed out.

He only lived a few doors off, and when he reached his den he ransacked his cupboard but only found a small piece of butter, a crust of bread and sufficient tea to make one not over-strong cup. However, with these ingredients he was able to prepare a royal feast, to which, no doubt, the thought that his friend was provided for added an agreeable sauce.

Day by day Samuel worked at his picture, limiting his appetite by the efficacious expedient of circumscribing his corporeal circumference, until one blessed day the work was finished.

Samuel surveyed his handiwork with the proud satisfaction of one who feels that the result of his labours has, approximately, at least, realised his lofty intentions. And a well-known connoisseur, Lord Everard, who had been introduced to Samuel by a friendly dealer, thought so, too, for he gave Samuel an exceedingly handsome cheque for the work and a flattering commission for another.

At last the tide in the affairs of Samuel Freshfield had turned, but by the irony of fate it had turned just a few weeks too late. The privation and self-denial he had undergone had strained his constitution to breaking point. Two days after the favour of his patron had so altered his fortunes he was found dead upon the floor of his room.

Mr. Ebenezer Freshfield was much affected by his brother's death. Seeing that, as next-of-kin, he succeeded to Samuel's works, of which there were some specimens, it was said, a little brutally, that he was very favourably affected. The interest of Lord Everard had been so beneficial to the commercial value of the late Samuel Freshfield's pictures that they fetched extraordinary prices, which materially benefited the balance of Mr. Ebenezer's account at his bankers.

And paragraphs appeared in the newspapers to the effect that Mr. Ebenezer Freshfield, the well-known and respected philanthropist, whose talented brother had so recently met with an untimely death, was quite prostrated by the sad event. The paragraph went on to state that when the many evidences of Mr. Ebenezer Freshfield's munificent benevolence were remembered, it would occasion no surprise to the world to know that he had made his brother's welfare his especial and loving care for years, and had, by his generosity, enabled his brother to pursue that artistic career which had been crowned with such splendid success, but which had come to such a tragic and premature end, to the poignant sorrow of the artistic world and general public, who would extend their heartfelt sympathy to Mr. Ebenezer Freshfield in his sudden bereavement!

HENRY GORDON.

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By George Manville Fenn.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Nurse Jennett—Has More Ideas.

Allan Murray felt day by day during Braetoun's long illness that he was passing through one of the most crucial tests that ever fell to the lot of man. The surgeon's share in the case soon came to an end. "I can do no more," he said; "it is the business of the physician to see if he can build up the old waste and keep the flame of life burning. It is a marvel to me that the man is alive, and I frankly own that I could not have saved him."

The long fight continued. Everyone was utterly exhausted with watching, and one night Olive and her father, who never left the little house, had been forced to go and lie down. The nurse, who had been indefatigable, had come on duty, and Murray, whose brain felt to be numb, was seated there by his patient.

The nurse had been busy preparing such things as would be wanted for the night, and had just arranged a table and placed the shaded lamp in its place, according to the regular custom, and then gone through the folding doors to the back room, leaving one fold half closed so that she could hear the slightest movement and come back at once if required.

Then the watch began, Murray being about to stay till one o'clock, when Olive would come and take his place, and the nurse lie down, Emsworth always coming in about six to relieve his daughter.

Murray's spirits were very low that night, and the temptation to give up was terribly strong. Something whispered to him that it was madness to go on. He rose to his feet, walked to the folding door and looked through the narrow slit to see that the nurse had sunk back in her chair and was sleeping heavily with her lips apart.

Murray frowned, and then his face grew smooth again.

"Poor creature," he said to himself; "she can do no more."

He returned to his seat intending to let her sleep till it was time for him to leave, and he had just taken his place again when the door opening upon the landing was softly opened, and the blood flushed to his temples, and a strange fit of trembling came over him as he turned to meet her who, he felt, was about to enter.

But it was Emsworth who came in very softly, nodded, and bent over the bed, to stand gazing down at the insensible man for a time.

"Why have you come?" said Murray at last.

"Can't sleep," was the reply. "Too much worn out. She has gone off very fast to-night, thank goodness."

No more was said for a few minutes.

Emsworth had turned and sunk into a chair opposite to the doctor, and kept on looking at him uneasily; but as soon as in the dim light he saw that Murray's eyes were directed inquiringly at him, he looked down nervously.

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This took place several times, and at last his lips moved as if he were speaking, but no words came.

"You are utterly worn out," said Murray. "Go and lie down; perhaps you could sleep now."

"Well, so are you worn out," said Emsworth, in an irritable whisper. "It's killing her, too; even the nurse is asleep. Look here, Murray; I'm not a brute. I want to do what's just and right, but there are bounds to everything. Why are we doing all this?"

Murray was silent. He dared not trust himself to speak, for these seemed to be the echo of his own thoughts.

"I say why are we doing all this? He can't recover. It is only keeping him in misery. Nature seems to say that he must die, and all this prolonged struggle is killing her. Come, speak out like a man; you feel, don't you, that you can't save him after all?"

"No," said Murray, after an effort. "I will not give up."

Emsworth was silent for a few minutes.

"It's like fighting against fate," he said at last. "That surgeon told me it was quite hopeless, and that he should have given it up from the first."

"How am I to look in Lady Braetoun's face if I have not struggled to the last?" said Murray coldly.

"Ah! and what for?" said Emsworth, after another pause; "for him to go on breaking her heart?"

"Or repent, and make her happy after all."

"Never," said Emsworth, in a passionate whisper. "I can bear it no longer. It is maddening, all this. It's killing her, poor child. I wish to God he was dead; she would suffer, and then be at rest."

"You must not talk like that," said Murray. "Go and lie down again."

"I cannot."

"You must. Go and try to sleep."

The stern masterful man rose with a sigh, and in obedience to the stronger will went slowly out, closed the door, and descended on tip-toe to the little back room, where a couch had been made up for him.

Murray listened till the last creak of a stair told that Emsworth had quite gone, and then he let his face fall into his hands, and groaned softly as he pressed his teeth upon his lower lip to keep it from quivering, for the temptation was stronger than ever.

At that moment there was a light, sharp tap on the window-pane, as if something had struck it, and looking out he let fall the blind again, glanced at his patient, and then stepped to the folding doors.

Nurse Jennett seemed to be sleeping soundly, and he passed out and descended the stairs, to softly open the front door and admit the cool night air.

As he stepped out, a closely veiled figure came quickly across from where the street lamp cast its light.

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"You again!" he said, in a low, reproachful voice. "And after what you promised me!"

"Don't, don't speak to me like that," she said faintly. "I'm weak and ill, Doctor."

"Then go home, and let your friends call in medical help."

"No, no," sobbed the girl, and she reeled and caught at his arm. "You don't understand. I—I can hardly speak."

"I did not mean to be so rough with you," he said more gently, and as she clutched at him her head fell back.

"No trick," he muttered. "Poor little lass! She is a true woman in spite of all."

In a minute or so she came to herself. Her eyes opened, and she stared about wildly.

"Where am I?" she panted. Then, with a faint cry of alarm, she tried to start from his arms.

"Wait a few minutes," he said kindly, "or the faintness will come back."

She looked at him suspiciously.

"Where am I? Who are you? Ah! I remember now, the doctor."

"Yes, the doctor. You should not have come again."

"I was obliged—I couldn't ask there. Oh, pray, pray tell me! I've been watching for hours. How is he now?"

"You promised me——"

"Yes," she said hysterically, "but don't torture me like this; tell me how he is now. They said he was dying. I saw you go in, and I've been here by the railings ever since. Is it—oh, please, please, speak!"

She caught his hand in hers, and made as if to sink upon her knees, but he prevented that act.

"Lord Braetoun has got over the worst, I think."

"Got over the worst, and he'll get well?"

"That depends on himself."

"Ah! this is a bad, miserable world; but what would it be without doctors? Thank you. I'll go home now. I'm so tired and so ill. But he will get well?"

"I have told you all I can."

"Thank you. I am so glad. Please," she added simply, "may I go now, and——"

"If you feel well enough. Shall I get you a glass of wine?"

"No. I only want to get home now. I feel as if I could go to sleep. Please, forgive me for calling you out. I saw your shadow on the window. I was nearly desperate, and felt as if I must go off the bridge."

"But now you'll go quietly home."

"Yes, I'll go back to Aunt's and wait; but I must come and ask how he is. I have been so patient, you know. I don't think I should have been able to live if I didn't come here and watch, and ask the girl for news. Thank you so much for speaking to me, for I don't think I want to die yet. I don't know, though. Everything is so hard. Life isn't such a great catch, after all."

She looked up at him piteously.

"Got over the worst, though," she said softly. "God bless you for what you've done. I'll go now."

She nodded at him quickly, drew her veil closely over her face, and glided along the pavement, while a minute later Murray heard the rattle of a cab.

"Gone," he said softly. "Ah, there are others suffer as much as I."

He entered and closed the door and stole up the stairs into the little drawing-room, to find Olive standing there in the shadow, ready to look at him indignantly.

"That woman sleeping, too," she cried reproachfully, "and my husband left quite alone. Oh, Doctor, it is too cruel. You insisted upon my lying down."

"I have not left him more than five minutes," he said deprecatingly.

"Five minutes! And he might have died. It is horrible—so cruel. Is there no one I can trust?"

Murray said no word in his defence, but went softly to the table, took a glass, and poured in a portion from a bottle. Then he turned to go and summon the nurse, but Olive checked him.

"No," she said, "let her sleep. I will help."

Then she went to Braetoun's left, to pass her hand softly beneath his shoulders and back, as Murray did the same from the right, and together they raised him, arm resting against arm, while the glass was held to the insensible man's lips, and he drank the contents of the glass. Then, as they lowered him down, and were withdrawing, hand touched hand, and as if an electric current had flashed through Murray, his fingers closed round the soft warm palm and held it in a spasmodic grip, which was softly returned, and Olive's eyes met those of Murray as they bent together over Braetoun, neither stirring for some moments.

Olive broke the silence, and her voice, mere whisper as it was, sounded humble and appealing, but there was no trace of passion or tremor in its tones as she said softly, returning the pressure the while:

"Forgive me. I was wrong. I know how cruel and unjust my words must have sounded to you who have been so unsparing of yourself;" and she began to smooth the pillow.

"I beg pardon, my lady; shall I do that?" said a voice. "I would have come directly if I had known."

"There is no need now," said Olive gently. Then to Murray, in the calmest, most unruffled way: "I'll go again now."

She bent down to gaze intently in Braetoun's face, and placing a hand on either side upon the pillow, kissed his forehead, while Murray felt the blood surging through his veins, as his temples throbbed, and a sensation as of fire scorching his brain assailed him, unconscious the while that the nurse was going to and fro, furtively watching first one and then the other from the darkened portion of the room, and with a tread as silent as that of some feline beast of prey.

Olive stole softly to the door, and then turned to whisper: "Mind that Dr. Murray has a little coffee soon."

"Yes, my lady, I shall not forget," said the woman, and the next moment doctor and nurse were alone.

The woman glanced at him from time to time, but he made no sign, spoke no word to her, merely sank in his chair by the head of the bed, as if to continue his watch, his nerves thrilling, and the blood still throbbing through his veins with the recollection of the soft, warm pressure of that hand, which seemed still to be lying clasped in his own.

And the nurse stole softly into the back room, to stand there motionless as soon as she was out of sight, thinking of what she should do. The light was very much lower, but it was far from being as dark as in the sick chamber. Her eyes shone out clearly, and a peculiar smile widened her mouth, as she made a suggestive gesture by pressing her mouth down upon the palm of her hand.

"And she's breaking her heart about him all the time," she said to herself, with the smile now displaying her white teeth; "but I don't think he'll get better—now."

CHAPTER XXIX.

In Lucy's Window-Box.

Two months crept by.

"Now you look here, miss," said Aunt Duncan sternly, as she sat at an open window facing the sea, and nodding her head slowly like a Chinese figure. "I know I'm a very weak old woman, and that the stouter I get the more stupid I seem, but I'm not quite so stupid, or such a blind old mole as you think."

"I don't know what you mean, Auntie," said Lucy, who in a very pretty seaside toilette, was also seated in the window, armed with an opera-glass, watching the passers-by, and scanning the seats and carriages along the sea front.

"Very well, then, I'll tell you, my dear, though you know

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all the time what I mean. My arm's getting as strong and well as can be, for I tried a bit of cutting out with the scissors and a noosepaper yesterday morning, and it's all nonsense for me to be stopping down at the sea-side, pretending it's doing me good."

"It is doing you a great deal of good, Auntie," said Lucy with a sigh of satisfaction, as her glass rested at last upon a group, about three hundred yards away, of an invalid carriage, beside which stood a thick-set gentleman, and a tall, graceful-looking lady.

"'Tisn't, and I'm beginning to fret again. I want to get home."

"You shall go home again soon."

"I shall, my dear, and very soon. Seaside's very nice to come to if you want to spend an 'appy day; but 'appy days kill one another, and it gets 'orrid sitting here so long doing o' nothing."

"You think so, Auntie, because you're not quite well and strong yet."

"No, I don't, miss; so don't you be a little 'umbug."

"Auntie!"

"Oh, I mean it; I always speak my mind. Seaside, indeed, where you can't get a bit o' real fresh fish! Don't tell me! It all comes down from London. It's second-hand—that's what it is. What they couldn't get rid of at Billingsgate they send down here, chuck it into the sea for about an hour, and pull it out again to 'umbug visitors with."

"What nonsense, Auntie!" cried Lucy, who sat there now with her elbows resting on the window-sill, so as to steady the glass, which was kept in one position.

"No, it ain't, miss. Think I don't know? Ketch me believing we get fish caught here! Why, them oysters I had yesterday were shameful. Of course, I didn't see 'em in both shells—fishmonger took good care of that—but I knowed they were all yawning, with their mouths wide open, because they were so tired of waiting to be sold."

"A'l a sign that your mouth's out of taste, Auntie."

"It ain't, miss, and don't you be so aggravating, or I shall 'it you. Look at the lobsters, too. Think I don't know the difference between a fresh boiled lobster and one put in the pot again? None for me, unless they're bought alive, and I have 'em boiled at 'ome. Then there was them s'rimps, why their skins was downright soft. We'll have a carriage and drive out this afternoon."

"Yes, Auntie, you shall," said Lucy eagerly.

"And go right away, ever so far, Shoreham way, where there's a real fisherman, and buy a lobster and some s'rimps, and bring 'em 'ome alive."

"No, no, Auntie; you can't ask the people here to boil them."

"Can't ask the people here to boil them? Oh, can't I? If they give me any of their nonsense, I'll go down in the kitchen and boil 'em myself. Pay 'em dear enough for what we do get done, anyhow."

"But there are plenty of fishermen along the beach here, Auntie, if we drive up and down."

"I dessay. Then I ain't going to drive up and down, miss. I don't want to show people my face and my noo dress. I want something decent to eat. Fishermen on the beach here? Tchah! I know. Half of 'em roughs from London in disguise, come down to see what they can get out of the visitors. You can't deceive me. There's that man with the flannel trousers up to his arm-pits, as is always worritin' me to go out in his boat, and as impudent as can be. Fishermen, indeed! Why, if he didn't once drive a Paddington 'bus, I don't know nothing. He's got a reg'lar Royal Oak look about him. Why I heard him say to the man as helps him push the boat off into the water. 'Old 'ard' as natural as life, and if that warn't enough, he sings 'Wo!' directly after. If ever I do come to the seaside again, I'll come to some place where it's real sea and real sand and real fishermen."

"Well, so it is here, Auntie," said Lucy, laughing merrily but without moving her eyes from the glass.

"No, it ain't, miss; it's all London stuck down by the sea-side, just like a noo piece at Doory Lane. Nothing don't seem real. It's all acting; even you're as bad."

"Why, Auntie!" cried the girl; "what amI doing?"

"Sticking there at the window just as if the manager had give us a box; and there you are with your opera glass, watching the show."

"Well, it's nice to watch the people," said Lucy, reddening a little.

"There, what did I say? Now, don't you call that acting? It's making life a reg'lar play, as it all has been lately. Fancy you trying to deceive me!"

"Oh, Auntie, I don't; I never would."

"And thinking me such a stupid old woman. I ain't blind. I saw my lord go by in his chair, with a man pushing him, and my lady and her father alongside, and ever since there you've been sitting with your silly eyes glued to that glass. Just as if I didn't know."

Lucy turned sharply round, and laid the glass on the sill, her cheeks flaming now, but gradually turning pale as she gazed with a wistful look in the old woman's eyes.

"Ah—ah—ah! Lucy, Lucy, if you dare to cry! There, look at you, with the hot water coming running out of your eyes. You'll spoil your frock. Oh, my own precious, don't cry, don't cry."

"I can't help it, Auntie. You are so cruel to me."

"I ain't, dear, only you do make me mad to see you go on as you do. Why couldn't you say downright why you wanted to come to Brighton, instead of pretending I wanted sea air? It was so mean."

"Yes, Auntie, it was, but I was so miserable when I found they'd left Brompton to come down here."

"Well, of course, I had my love affairs when I was young, but nobody can't throw in my teeth that I ever made such a fool of myself about a man as you do."

"Perhaps not, Auntie," said the niece. "I suppose I am very weak."

"Weak? It's shocking. Where is your pride?"

"Don't, don't talk about it, please, Auntie," said the girl humbly.

"I must, Lucy, for your good. Now do try and be reasonable. You know how nice that Mr. Emsworth spoke. Why, he was like a father to you, and really, old as I am, I took to him so that really I do believe if he'd have asked me I could have thought about getting married again."

"Oh, Auntie!"

"Well, my dear, human natur' is human natur', but it wouldn't have made no difference to you, for my will's made, and it can't be unmade. I call him a man, that's what I call him. None of your stuck-up arrystockricy sort of people, but a real honest gentleman. I saw how he took to you, and when you'd gone upstairs, crying, he sits down on one of the chairs, never noticing as there was a lot of gauze and spangles in it, and talks to me like a man should. Why, what did he say?"

"I don't know," said Lucy wearily.

"Don't tell stories, miss! You do know. I've told you times enough. Why, we were the best of friends directly. Just as if we'd known one another for years. It was just because he opened his 'art to me, just as men should, and because we was both in love."

"Auntie!"

"No, no, no, stupid girl, not that sort o' love, but proper sort o' love. I let out to him how fond I was of you, and he lets out how fond he was of his dear gal. And there we was at once. That settled it. I told him how I'd brought you up, and he told me how things had gone with him ever since his poor dear lady was took. Ah! how we did talk. Why, if there they ain't a-coming back! Lucy, my dear, I've a good mind to go and call on him at the 'otel."

"Auntie, no!" cried the girl, springing back from the window.

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"Oh, I don't see why not. I believe he'd be glad to see me. No, he wouldn't. You've spoiled that. Makes it look as if you'd followed them down; and so you did, and cheated me."

"I couldn't help it, Auntie," sighed the girl. "I felt obliged," and she stood away from the window and watched the little party go by.

"But you should have had more pride, my dear. Nobody couldn't have spoke more fair than he did, my dear. He says bygones must be bygones, which is quite right. He says he was very sorry for you, for you seemed to be as nice and sweet as any gal he'd ever set eyes on, but he couldn't help loving his child, and if you'd do the right thing he was prepared to do the same.

"'That must be all over now,' he says, 'for both their sakes. My poor gal has forgiven him, and I can't have her heart broke again by his coming to see your daughter.'

"'Which she's only a niece,' I says.

"'Well,' he says in his arbitry way, 'it's all the same. She's a woman, and a very beautiful one too, and if she'll do the right thing and promise never to see him again, I'm a rich man, Mrs. Duncan,' he says, 'and whatever you think would be a fair thing for her to have every year, she shall have it, for I'll buy her a nooity.'

"I told him he was a gentleman, and it was very han'some of him, but there wasn't no need, for I'd got plenty for both of us; but I promised him that if ever you wanted money I'd ast him, and then he said he'd see as you should keep the little house and everything, and, as you know, I promised him as everything should be all over, and then you cheated me into comin' down here, and you—— Well, of all—— You reaching your head outer winder with the glass to stare after 'em, and I don't believe you've hardly heard a word I said."

Lucy turned to gaze in a bewildered way at her aunt.

"I'm ashamed of you, Lucy, that I am, and we'll go back to London at once."

"Go back?" faltered the girl.

"Yes; it's shocking. You know he's made it up with his lady, and he's getting well again and you going on like that."

"I did not promise anything, dear," said the girl stoutly, as her eyes wandered towards the window again.

"Look this way, miss," cried Aunt Duncan. "I ain't got so much breath that I can waste what I have got by shouting at you and you not listening. I promised her father for you, and I told him I'd see as you behaved right, and you shall. I haven't had a happy moment since I found out how you cheated me. It's too bad, Lucy, too bad for anything. I did think you'd have behaved better than this."

"Did you, Auntie?" said the girl wearily. "You can't understand—you can't understand."

"Oh, yes, I can. I haven't seen all the best plays for nothing, my dear. You're trying to be the leading lady, and the heroine, but it won't do. That old gentleman was as handsome over it as ever he could be, and I've undertook for you to meet him half way, and, if you don't do as I want you, it's going to be bad times for both of us. Now, then, Baby, I've had quite enough of the seaside and so have you. You say I'm better, and it's done me a lot o' good, and I say you're worse, and it's done you a lot of harm, besides making you cheat your poor old aunt in that 'orrid way. I wouldn't ha' thought it of you."

Lucy sank back in a chair, and covered her face with her hands.

"I couldn't help it, dear, I couldn't help it. I only wanted to be where I could see him and know that he was getting better. He doesn't know I'm here. That wasn't much."

"Yes, it was. It keeps you always thinking about him, my dear, and making yourself mis'rable, instead of forgetting him. That's what you've got to do, and as soon as possible. There, I must speak. There's times when we can't do what we like, and this is one of them. Now, I'm going to tell these people we're going back to London to-morrow, and that means paying 'em up to Saturday and another week."

"No, no, Aunt, dear, I can't bear it," cried Lucy. "Stop till Saturday week, and by that time I can bear it better."

"Not you, Baby. If you've got to take a nasty dose of physic, it's best took at once. You can't take it none the better for thinking about it for more'n a week, so just you be a good girl, and don't go making two married people's lives unhappy, after one of 'em's been just on the edge of the grave, and the other ready to go after him. You've got to come away, my dear, so don't you make no more bones about it. That affair's all over and done with."

Lucy said nothing, but sat back with her face still buried in her hands, while Aunt Duncan wrinkled up hers a little more, and then rose and rang the bell.

CHAPTER XXX.

On the Brighton Line.

A careworn-looking, hard-worked girl answered the summons, and Aunt Duncan sent word by her that she wished to see the mistress, who came in then and stared hard on hearing her lodger's first words, while Lucy turned ghastly.

"I want my bill, please," said the old lady. "We're going back to town this evening."

"Going, ma'am?"

"Yes, going. Didn't I speak plain? Brighton don't suit me, nor my niece neither."

"Why, really, ma'am, I was thinking how much better you both looked."

"Oh, were you? Just look at her face; she's as white as white."

Lucy darted an indignant glance at her aunt, but said nothing.

"Let me have my bill up to Saturday night," continued Aunt Duncan.

"Oh, certainly, ma'am, if you wish it, but——"

"You want a week's notice, well, charge it in the bill, and the sooner the better. Come, Lucy, my dear; you and me had better see about our packing, and what time there's a train. I'll go by one of them fast ones as don't stop nowhere, and get it done."

There was a flash of resentment now in Lucy's eyes, and the old lady tightened her lips, and made ready for a scene, but, to her surprise, her niece hung her head directly after, and followed her docilely enough up to their bedroom, where, as soon as the door was closed, she gave her a warm hug.

"Now, that's just what I like, my dear, for it shows you felt you were wrong, and want to do what's right. I dare say the people what's had to do with the stage may be very wicked in some folks' eyes, but we've got our 'arts in the right place, and when we've got to do the proper thing we know how to do it. You're going to do it, and so let's pack up, and first thing you look at the time-table, and tell me what time there's a train."

Lucy obeyed without a word of opposition, and in a few minutes announced that there was one at five o'clock.

"Does it stop anywhere?"

"At two or three stations, Aunt, dear," said Lucy, who looked now as if she had been stunned.

"Then that won't do. I want a fast train. I want to get home without dilly-dallying about, my dear. What other is there?"

"One at a quarter to six, Aunt."

"Say Auntie, my dear, Don't be cross with me when I'm working for your good. Now, then, how many times does that stop?"

"Only once, Aunt, for tickets."

"Then we'll go by that, and have some dinner as soon as we get up, and go to the theayter after. This place is too dull, and we want a change. Now, then, pack up, my dear,

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as soon as you can; then we'll have a cup of tea, and it will be time to go. I've had enough Brighton to last me all my life. Two months have we been here, and I'm hungry to get to dear old London again."

Lucy made no reply, but busied herself over the packing in the same crushed, dreary way, unconscious of the fact that her aunt was watching her furtively all the time, till the task was at an end. Then only did she look up.

"She's a-scheming out something or she wouldn't be so quiet," thought the old lady, but she said nothing then.

"Shall I ring and tell them to have a fly here in time, Aunt?"

"Auntie."

"Yes, Auntie," said the girl sadly.

"Yes, ring, my dear, and let's get it over," whispered the old lady, drawing the girl to her breast. "There, don't fret, my precious; it's quite right, and you must never, never see him again."

"Aunt!"

"Auntie."

"Well, Auntie, dear, you're killing me."

"Then it shall be with love, my precious, and nothing else. But I did promise that old gentleman as I'd do what was quite square, and you will, my own. There, ring."

Lucy obeyed, and dressed for their departure, still as if she were in a dream, and stepped at last into the luggage-laden fly, which was there in ample time for their departure.

Few people were returning, and, after enlisting the assistance of a porter, who promised effusively that the luggage should all be seen in the van, and selected an empty *coupé* for them, long experience having taught him the value of well-rendered services to stout, elderly lady invalids, Aunt Duncan and her niece sat in the comfortable carriage alone.

"Ah!" exclaimed the old lady, with a sigh of content. "This is nice. Isn't it time we started? Oh, my precious, don't, don't cry."

"Auntie, you're breaking my heart," cried the girl, breaking into a passionate burst of sobbing.

"No, no, no, my darling," cried the old lady, petting and caressing her; "indeed, indeed, it's what we ought to do; and it'll save you a lot o' pain by-and-bye. You mustn't cry now and make a scene. We don't want all the world and his wife to know our troubles, and oh, dear, oh, I do wish they'd start and let us get away. Lucy, Lucy!"

But the girl cried more bitterly, turning her face away to let it sink in the corner of the cushioned carriage, her breast heaving and the sobs tearing their way from her breast.

"Don't, don't, my dear, pray," wailed the old lady, "or I shall break down, too. I never saw you cry like that before, and you mustn't, dear. Oh, why don't they go on? Where's the porter? Where's the guard? Don't, don't be ill, my own dear. There—there, I can't bear it, I give in. Never mind the price of the tickets. I give in, and you must be wicked, I suppose. We'll go back to the rooms, and you shall sit and watch him as if it was a play. Life is all a play. Shakespeare said so, and he knew; and you make me cry as bitterly as I ever did at the best piece I saw. There, wipe your eyes, my precious. I'm a stupid old fool, I suppose, but I aways did give up to and indulge you in everything, and I must now. Be quick, or they'll take us. Here, guard, guard!"

"Quick, please, if you're going on," cried a voice from the platform, and they had a glimpse through their tears of the stalwart guard in uniform, as he stood looking towards the rear of the train, with his whistle to his lips.

The next minute a gentleman appeared with a lady, and the guard opened the door.

"Quick! in with you, my dear!" and the words froze upon the lips of Lucy and her aunt, as they half rose to leave the carriage.

It was nearly instantaneous. As the lady stepped in an invalid chair was run up to the door, and two porters lifted a gentleman into the carriage, jumped out, and another gentleman stepped in, and the door was banged.

"Nurse in the next carriage, sir," said the guard, whose whistle immediately sounded loudly, and the train began to glide from the platform, as Lucy sank back in the corner, feeling her dress brushed by the invalid's elbow as he sank back, while the lady was opposite to him, side by side with Aunt Duncan.

"That's about as close as ever I was to being left behind, eh, Doctor?" said one of the gentlemen by the door.

"Yes, we drove it too long. Don't feel any worse, I hope, Braetoun?"

"I? Oh, no. Legs a bit shaky, that's all. Don't put on a white face like that, Olive."

"But are you sure you don't feel faint?"

Braetoun did not answer, for a low gasping sigh on his left had taken his attention, and he turned to the right, where Lucy sat shrinking back in the corner, not seeing him, but with her eyes fixed on Olive's.

The fascination of her long look was mutual, and neither could for the time withdraw her gaze, while the train was fast gathering speed for its hour and a quarter's run, and no stoppage until London was pretty close at hand.

For this is a little world, and fate plays strange pranks in bringing together those who do and those who do not wish to meet.

(To be continued.)

RESULT OF POST-CARD COMPETITION.

NO. 13.

The first correct London post-card received was that sent by Mr. F. Cameron, 3, Harford Place, Drury Lane, W.C.; from the provinces by Mr. Edgar E. Williams, 55, Grant Street, Birmingham. The correct total was 1,051.

RESULT OF *Jumbled Story Competition.*

No. 12.

Fourteen competitors succeeded in correctly solving Jumbled Story No. 12, and, in accordance with the conditions, the first arrivals have received the prizes.

Mrs. Nayler, 74, Lyndhurst Road, Peckham, S.E., has been sent £5; and £1 each to the following readers: Miss R. Cahuac, 27, Commercial Road, E.; Mr. Henry W. Searle, 25, Beauclerc Road, Hammersmith, W.; Mrs. C. Milton, 2, Horton Street, Newcastle, Staffs; Miss Lylian Ralph, St. Hilaire, Canford Cliffs, Bournemouth; Miss Blythman, Skenington Rectory, Banbury.

To each of the remaining eight correct competitors, whose names appear below, a penknife has been forwarded as a consolation prize:

T. E. Murray, H.M. Customs, Custom House, Liverpool; W. Cheetham, 1, Belmont Villa, Victoria Road, Romford; E. M. Tilsley, Perry Barr, Birmingham; B. C. Smythe, St. Anne's House, Lewes; S. L. Pratt, Rothsay House, Longley Road, Tooting, Graveney, S.W.; Miss K. H. Whiteford, 29, Fairholme Road, W. Kensington; Wm. Boyle, Harbour Office, Swansea; Wm. Lester, 6, Ranelagh Road, Wood Green, N.

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LONGEVITY AND CORPULENCY.

We have received a copy of the just issued 18th edition of Mr. F. Cecil Russell's "Corpulency, and the Cure" (Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.). This issue is in itself indicative of the widespread influence which the author now exercises as a successful expert in the treatment of obesity, while the additions to the evidence which, as a statistician, he is in the habit of collecting on the subject are suggestive of some curious reflections. It is evident that Mr. Russell is annually treating thousands of cases of excessive fat with a success which, in the rapidity and the permanence of its manifestation is truly marvellous. That the enormous popularity of his system is likely to increase in the future is most probable, because it is free from all the drawbacks which have rendered the Banting and other methods of reducing corpulence unacceptable to the majority of the sufferers, who have regarded these cures as rather worse than the complaint. By attacking the causes rather than the symptoms of obesity, he strengthens the digestive organs, thus actually increasing, instead of decreasing, the appetite, while the surplus weight is being reduced at a wonderfully rapid rate, amounting to pounds per week, and often stones per month. Add to this that there is no mystery about the nature of the absolutely innocuous preparation, the recipe for which Mr. Russell supplies in his capital little volume (256 pages), which may be obtained post free by sending two penny stamps to the author's offices, at the address given above. It seems certain, therefore, that, as a result of the happy revolution which the patient researches of this specialist, with the aid of a distinguished physician as a collaborateur, has effected, the average of longevity will, before long, be appreciably raised. Obesity is, indeed, one of the few antagonistic influences remaining which, especially among the more prosperous classes, prevent the great majority of people of both sexes becoming centenarians. With advanced ideas in regard to wholesome food, clothing, and sanitary arrangements, it only remains to get rid of clogging fat to live an ideally hygienic, and, therefore, a very prolonged life.—*Belfast Evening Telegraph.*

GOOD NEWS FOR STOUT PERSONS.

It is a matter for congratulation that obesity is taking its proper place as a disease, and is receiving that scientific attention which it has long lacked. It does not follow that a person need to be the size of Sir John Falstaff to show that he is unhealthily fat. According to a person's height, so should his weight correspond, and this standard has been prepared by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., so that anyone can see at a glance whether or no he is too stout. People in the past have been wont to regard fatness as constitutional, and something to be laughed at rather than to be prescribed for seriously; but this is evidently an error, as persons whose mode of life has caused a certain excess of flesh require treating for the cause of that excess, not by merely stopping further increase, but by removing the cause itself. It is astonishing how long we go on perpetuating error, and how difficult it is to make people disbelieve anything, no matter how palpably false the principle, if it has become at all firmly fixed in the public mind. These facts with regard to obesity, however, are so obvious, that there ought to be no difficulty about the acceptance when once they become known; and as a matter of fact, the immense number of persons who have already acknowledged their truth by recording the benefits received from Mr. Russell's treatment is simply wonderful. It is marvellous how this "Pasteur" and "Koch" of English discoverers can actually reduce so much as fourteen pounds in seven days with a simple herbal remedy. His book only costs twopence, and he is quite willing to afford all information to those sending as above. It is really worth reading.—*Southport Visitor.*

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West Cornforth, Ferryhill.—Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

127, Out Gang Lane, Old Radford, Notts.—Miss E. P. PARSONS says: "I was 16st. before taking Tablets, and am now 15st.—going on nicely."

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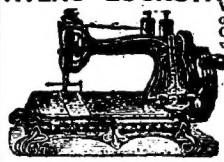

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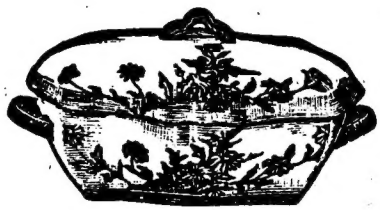

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